“Thinking and speaking for ourselves”:

The development of shack dwellers’ political voice in the age of ICTs

Kalinca Gutierrez Copello

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Abstract

A prevailing urban phenomenon of the 21st century is that more people than ever before are living in informal settlements. As residents of informal settlements, the majority of shack dwellers can be considered socially, economically and politically marginalised citizens. The combination of poverty, marginalisation, and precarious living conditions has in many cases given rise to a vicious cycle. In this cycle, shack dwellers lack an effective voice and are unable to participate in political decision-making processes that affect their lives, leading to deepening deprivation and marginalisation. To break this cycle, the development of a genuine political voice of shack-dwellers is essential. However, the process of developing a political voice in shack dwellers has only received scant academic attention and is poorly understood.

One aspect of this process is the role of information communication technologies (ICTs) in enabling political voice. This has received some attention and has become a salient topic in academic study and development policy. Despite growing adoption of certain ICT tools by marginalised individuals, there is little evidence of their meaningful use for political voice. Access to ICTs is not the same as meaningful use of ICTs for political voice. Only a few studies have examined the issue of meaningful use of ICTs for political voice.

This dissertation explores the factors influencing the processes by which marginalised individuals are able to develop a political voice, with a particular focus on the role of two increasingly ubiquitous ICTs – mobile phones and internet. A qualitative case study of a shack dweller grassroots organisation in South Africa (Abahlali baseMjondolo (AbM)) is used to explore different types of political voice. The case study looks at the circumstances under which members of AbM are able to develop individual and collective forms of political expression, and the role that the use of ICTs play in this development.

Data collected from semi-structured interviews and participant observation for this study suggests that, individual differences in combination with entrenched traditions

and social structures based on patronage may undermine the development and or expression of political voice. However, active engagement in a grassroots organisation was found to be useful to overcome these limitations and for some individuals to develop their political voices. AbM members were able to engage in collective processes which led to the development of social bonds, trust, self-confidence, and critical reflection.

Both the internet and mobile phones were found to play an important role in the development of political voice of AbM members. However, interaction between the use of ICTs and the development of a political voice is complex. In many instances the technology has enabled mobilization, as well as given individuals a feeling of security. Where this has happened, the appropriation and re-purposing of ICTs to fit the needs of AbM members has come about as a result of attaching meaning to these technologies, which did not exist before AbM. ICTs can facilitate the development of political voice, in particular by facilitating collective processes (*e.g.* mobilization), channelling support and trust, as well as raising self-confidence. Yet, as the case of AbM demonstrates, ICTs have not operated as a political equalizer within AbM. The use of ICTs for political voice might have even created new barriers for the development of political voice of some members.

This dissertation brings together disparate stands of literature dealing with ICTs, political voice, social movements, empowerment, community psychology, and participation to conceptualise the development of a political voice. Moreover, a framework is devised to analyse the nature and the process of this development in marginalised individuals, as well as the role played by ICTs in this process.

This dissertation aims to bring an understanding of the complex relationship between ICTs and political voice of marginalised individuals. An understanding of the process can provide important inputs to devise more effective design and implementation of policies and projects aimed at increasing political participation of an ever-growing population of disenfranchised and marginalised people living in informal settlements.

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Contents

Tables and Figures

List of acronyms

AbM	Abahlali baseMjondolo
AEC	Anti-Eviction Campaign in the Western Cape
AGM	Annual General Meeting
ANC	African National Congress
APF	Anti-Privatization Forum
BNG	Breaking New Ground
CALS	Center for Applied Legal Studies
CDC	Community Development Committee
CEPD	Certificate in Education and Participatory Development
CLP	Church Land Programme
COHRE	Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
COSAS	The Congress of South African Students
EZLN	*Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional'* (Zapatista Army of National Liberation)
GBP	Great British Pound
GDP	Gross domestic product
ICT	Information Communication Technology
ICT4D	Information Communication Technology for Development
IFP	Inkatha Freedom Party
KRDC	Kennedy Road Development Committee
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
LPM	Landless People's Movement
MEC	Member of Executive Council
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
PCM	'Please call me' SMS
PEB	Personal Experiences and Background
PIE Act	Prevention of Illegal Eviction of and Unlawful Occupation of the Land Act
PPII	People Power II
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SECC	Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee
SERI	Socio-Economic Rights Institute
SMO	Social Movement Organisation
SMS	Short Message Service
SPD	(theory of) Socio-Political Development
TAC	Treatment Action Campaign
TZSN	Transnational Zapatista Solidarity Network
UKZN	University of Kwazulu-Natal
ZAR	South African Rand

1. Introduction

Shack dwellers, as marginalised urban poor, are often excluded from political discourse. Shack dwellers are trapped in a perpetual cycle of lack of access to services, and economic and social opportunities to improve their lives. Policy and decisions made about their livelihood disregard their needs and views as to how, and where they should live their lives. Shack dwellers are often marginalised and disenfranchised of the right to speak or think for themselves.

Some shack dwellers are attempting to break this perpetual cycle by demanding to be part of decision-making processes which affect their lives. Some shack dwellers are challenging the established system and entrenched processes by demanding the right to be heard.

This dissertation examines the process of developing a political voice in shack dwellers, who are poor and marginalised, and what role Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have in this process. Specifically, I focus on how shack dwellers develop a political voice when engaged in a grassroots organisation, and the role of both mobile phones and the internet in this process.

Shack dwellers and the lack of political voice

A prevailing urban phenomenon of the 21st century is that more people than ever before are living in informal settlements. Over the last five decades urban spaces have grown rapidly, especially in developing countries. Informal settlements have grown and expanded alongside this urbanisation. Currently, an estimated 1 billion people live in informal settlements. Projections indicate that this number will reach 2 billion by the year 2030, or one in four people on the planet (Baker, 2008; Neuwirth, 2005).

Informal settlements, have been defined as: “settlements of the urban poor developed through unauthorised occupation of land” (Huchzermeyer, 2006a, p.3). Informal settlements are often characterized by overcrowded, dilapidated, and precarious living

conditions. Informal settlements, also referred to as slums, shantytowns, favelas, or squatter camps are unplanned and often unlawful occupations of land by the poor. Some of these terms for informal settlements have negative and stigmatising connotations (Brum, 2012; Dovey and King, 2012; Huchzermeyer, 2011). The word slum, for instance, has been used as a synonym for vice, disease prone, and criminal population (Davis, 2006). The negative connotation of the terms hints at the inherent problems in these areas, as well as inadequate policies (Huchzermeyer, 2011) and approaches used to deal with rapid and unstructured urban development (Davis, 2006).[1]

Since the 1950s a number of governments of developing countries have launched policies (sometimes tellingly referred to as crusades) to clear cities of slums (Brum, 2013; Davis, 2006; Huchzermeyer, 2004). For decades, residents of informal settlements, known as shack dwellers, have suffered from forceful evictions, and their consequences. Aside from forced removals, shack dwellers in, for instance, Brazil, Nigeria, India, South Africa have had their homes bulldozed, or have been moved to the outskirts of cities, away from jobs, schools, and essential public services (Hodges, 2001; Huchzermeyer, 2004, 2011; Plessis, 2006). Shack dwellers are often silent victims of policies that do not protect, but in some cases, jeopardise their own survival.

Shack dwellers typically have little political representation and lack means or channels to demand essential services (Appadurai, 2004; Narayan, 2000; Narayan *et al.*, 2000; Walker, 2009). Because shack dwellers lack security of tenure (Cross, 1995; Durand-Lasserve and Royston, 2002; Mitlin, 2000), they are often deprived of rights and adequate access to basic infrastructure and service provision by the state – for example lack of basic sanitation, water, and electricity. Shack dwellers are not only poor, but are often marginalised citizens[2] – who lack a political voice and therefore do

[1] There are no agreed definitions and some terms are used interchangeably. Huchzermeyer (2011), for example, uses the term "slum" interchangeably with "informal settlement" while alerting to its problematic connotations and pointing to the need of creating a more suitable term. In this dissertation I use the term informal settlement.

[2] The term marginalised is very broad and used to define different groups with different kinds of deprivation and lacking access to rights and services. A person might be described as marginalised in

not participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives (Chambers, 2005; DFID, 2000; Sanderson, 2012).

The role of ICTs

Over the past 20 years, the subject of political voice of marginalised people and communities has gained momentum among academics, government institutions, and civil society organisations.[3] The increasing availability of information and communication technologies (ICTs), such as internet and mobile phones, have been hailed as a solution to marginalisation by allowing access to political and discursive democratic processes.

ICTs have been claimed to have a transformative potential, by channelling political information, and by creating new low-cost forms of participation (Donner, 2008c; Garrett, 2006; Papacharissi, 2002). Wide spread adoption of mobile phones among the poor, and increasing use and availability of the internet in developing countries (Internet World Stats, 2012; Robinson, 2006), has led to an expectation that these technologies would channel the voice of the marginalised.

Despite potential benefits, ICTs are not leading to greater participation and political voice by marginalised individuals (Leighninger, 2014). Previous research has shown that political voice channelled through ICTs often mirrors existing non-virtual traditional power dynamics (Brodock, 2010; Schlozman *et al.*, 2012). This means that although marginalised groups and individuals, such as the shack dwellers, have been

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one respect, might not be marginalised in other contexts (Prilleltensky and Gonick, 1996). Germani states that, to be described as marginalised, an individual must see him/herself as lacking participation in "multiple domains of socioeconomic and political activity" (1980, p.281). The concept of marginalised is used in this study to describe the economically impoverished individuals who lack access to public services and a political voice, and is further described in Chapter 2.

[3] Civil society organisations is a term usually used to refer to a wide array of "community groups, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), labour unions, indigenous groups, charitable organisations, faith-based organisations, professional associations, and foundations"(World Bank, 2013), as well as social movement organisations (SMOs) (Esteves *et al.*, 2009) that "manifest interests and will of citizens" (Dictionary.com Unabridged).

adopting certain ICT tools, there is little evidence of their meaningful use for political voice.

Although there is wide agreement among academics, government bodies and civil society that access to ICTs is not the same as meaningful use of ICTs for political voice, few studies have examined the specific opportunities and challenges facing marginalised people in this context (Margolis and Resnick, 2000; Tacchi, 2005a).

Context and rationale

Reducing marginalisation and allowing citizens to participate in democratic processes in a fair and equitable manner is a cornerstone of modern democratic societies. A functioning democracy requires "mechanisms for the free expression of political voice so that members of the public can communicate information about their experiences, needs, and preferences and hold public officials accountable for their conduct in office" (Schlozman *et al.*, 2012, p.3). In that sense political voice serves two democratic functions according to Schlozman:

> "communicating information and providing incentives to policy makers. That is, through political voice, citizens inform policy makers about their interests and preferences and place pressure on them to respond positively to what they have heard" (Schlozman *et al.*, 2012, p.3).

This research addresses two issues. First, how do shack dwellers develop a political voice? This process is unclear. Understanding the process leading to, or the factors enabling, the development of a political voice may yield novel approaches for the design of policies and engagement with a marginalised citizenry. In order to overcome their lack of political voice, marginalised individuals often engage in collective action – or collective processes (Craig and Mayo, 2004; Diani, 2000; Freire, 1970, 1983, 1992; Milan, 2013; Serrano-García, 1994; Slater and Tacchi, 2004; Summers-Effler, 2002; Watts *et al.*, 2003). For many shack dwellers around the world, engaging in collective

processes means participating in a grassroots social movement or organisation.[4] Through grassroots social movements and organisations, shack dwellers are able to self-organise and mobilise, and set their own agenda. Engagement in grassroots social movements and organisations might enable, foster, and catalyse the development of political voice.

The second issue addressed in this dissertation relates to how ICTs can be meaningfully used for political voice by shack dwellers? Overall, there seems to be a lack of meaningful use of ICTs for political voice by shack dwellers despite wide adoption of certain ICT tools. Few studies have addressed the reasons for this lack of meaningful use and whether ICTs can play a role in overcoming the lack of political voice. It is thus difficult to critically examine the validity of claims of a transformative potential of these technologies on the participation of marginalised members of society.

To study the role of ICTs in the development of political voice, an understanding is required of the complex processes involved by which some marginalised shack dwellers become politically active. Moreover, an acknowledgement of the social and individual contexts is necessary to identify the role played by technology at various points in the process of developing a political voice (Brodock, 2010; Selwyn, 2004; van Dijk, 2005). Communication processes which occur as a result of engagement in grassroots social movements and organisations, might offer important clues to understand the meaningful use of ICTs for political voice.

Building a theoretical and conceptual framework

In order to study both issues, this dissertation builds an analytical framework informed by various bodies of literature – *i.e.* political voice, ICTs, social movements, empowerment, participation, conscientization and community psychology – brought together to build an understanding of the development of political voice. The

[4] Due to the clear organisational boundaries of AbM, it is described in this dissertation as a grassroots organisation. However, a clarification on the similarities and applicability of the literature on social movements to grassroots organisation is described in Chapter 3.

analytical framework is further extended and informed by empirical data gathered from extensive interview data and drawn from a period of participant observation.

A review of the relevant literature showed that whilst many concepts and factors have been identified across both ICTs and political voice literatures, these have not been brought together in a coherent manner. For instance, ICTs and political voice have been examined in the social movement literature, but have not been put together in the context of marginalised groups. I have also brought in additional bodies of literature – *i.e.* empowerment, conscientization, participation and community psychology – to elucidate the process of developing a political voice. The empowerment, participation, and community psychology literature, for instance, have all used the concept of conscientization (Carr, 2003; Gaventa and Cornwall, 2008; Gutierrez, 1994, 1995; Servaes, 1996c) as a way to understand the process of developing a political voice. These reveal a number of factors that influence the process of developing a political voice by marginalised individuals (as described in Chapter 2). The literature on ICTs, however, tends to focus on technologies, some examples of general adoption (*i.e.* not for political engagement), and reasons for non-adoption of ICTs. However, there is limited discussion and understanding of the factors behind the non-engagement with ICTs for political voice of marginalised people (van Dijk, 2005).

To address these gaps in the literature, a framework is built to study the process of developing a political voice in marginalised individuals. More specifically, I explore how, and under which circumstances the development of political voice in marginalised individuals is helped or hindered by engagement with a grassroots organisation, and what the role of the internet and the mobile phone is in this process.

The research is structured in this dissertation by focusing on two research questions:

1. How do shack dwellers develop a political voice?
2. What is the role of ICTs in the process of shack dwellers developing a political voice?

I examine these two research questions by investigating the case of a grassroots organisation of South African shack dwellers, called Abahlali baseMjondolo (AbM). AbM offers an interesting case as an organisation created by and composed of marginalised individuals, founded with the goal to seek security of tenure, housing, and the right to the city (Gibson, 2007; Harris, 2006; Pithouse, 2006a). AbM was founded at a time when mobile phones were widely available among South African shack dwellers. AbM also has a dynamic web presence, since 2007, reaching supporters and observers in over 20 countries. Data collected included information about how individual members use mobile phones and internet for AbM related activities, and how this has affected the development and expression of their individual political voices.

Findings

The empirical study shows that, with rare exceptions, the majority of members had a very low degree of political voice before joining the organisation. Some members described being so scared that they would never challenge or even question, for instance, local authorities. Members were affected by similar factors to those which generally prevented shack dwellers from developing and expressing political voice. These include low self-esteem, sense of inability and isolation (*e.g.* having no support), and adverse effects of patronage relations, which are common within South African informal settlements (Carter and May, 1999; Francis, 2002; Kessel and Oomen, 1997).

The case study indicates that some shack dwellers have developed a stronger political voice during their engagement with AbM. This does not necessarily mean that membership in a grassroots organisation in itself causes the development of political voice. A causal relationship is difficult to discern, and development of a political voice might also be linked to contextual factors external to AbM, such as the political environment, or social structures found in informal settlements. However, in this particular case data collected supports the view that active engagement in AbM is strongly linked to the development of political voice.

Through AbM – a grassroots organisation founded, led and composed of shack dwellers – individuals engaged in collective processes that strengthened the development of social bonds, trust, self-confidence, and critical reflection. These factors, together with others identified in the case study, contributed to, or even enabled the development of individual political voices. AbM could thus be seen as an enabler or catalyst, helping the development of political voice along.

The role of both the internet and mobile phones in supporting the development of the political voice(s) of AbM's members is complex. Some technologies have enabled mobilization and created a feeling of security. Yet, use of technologies for political voice presents a multitude of new challenges for shack dwellers. Nevertheless, appropriation and re-purposing of these technologies comes as a result of attaching meaning to these technologies. Before AbM, members claimed they saw no reason or purpose in using ICTs for any kind of political mobilization, let alone for expressing a political voice. Through active participation in AbM, some individuals described having realized the potential of the Internet and re-purposed their use of mobile phones to support their engagement with AbM. As a consequence, these members started to engage in meaningful use of ICTs for political voice.

The case provides an insight into how, and under which circumstances, shack dwellers develop a political voice. The introduction of ICTs and their role within AbM is investigated by identifying and analysing the factors influencing the process of developing a political voice.

This dissertation contributes in three ways to the discourse on the development of political voice by marginalised individuals. First, it provides a detailed investigation of the development political voice in marginalised individuals. The study further identifies factors relevant to the formation of political voice and the role of ICTs in this process. Second, the study establishes an analytical framework to identify factors that influence the process of developing and expressing political voice, based on different bodies of literature and an in depth study of a grassroots organisation of marginalised

individuals. Lastly, the study provides a typology that differentiates three distinct types of political voice among shack dwellers.

Structure of the dissertation

This dissertation is divided into 8 Chapters. Chapter 2 frames the research problem described above through a review of key bodies of literature: political voice, social movements, and information communication technologies (ICTs). This Chapter also develops the analytical framework, by including other bodies of literature, to study the process of developing a political voice by marginalised individuals.

Chapter 3 describes the study design, choice of case study, and the qualitative methods used to collect data. Chapter 3 also provides some demographics and describes the complex and challenging context in which I conducted fieldwork. Moreover, the Chapter also provides a description as how the analytical proposed framework on Chapter 2 is formatted into categories used for coding and organising data collected.

Chapter 4 gives a background on South Africa. The focus of this background is contextual information of particular relevance and pertinence to the study, including economic, social and political aspects of South Africa. A particular focus is on post-apartheid social policies in regard to poverty alleviation and housing; the context and nature of informal settlements, their social and political structure and divisions; the rise of social movements and grassroots organisations in South Africa; and examples of the use of ICTs by these organisations.

Chapter 5 presents Abahlali baseMjondolo's (AbM) emergence and history, major events, and its structure. The Chapter also examines what kinds of organisational political voice AbM has. It includes a description of what kinds of ICTs use were known before conducting fieldwork. This Chapter includes some of the criticism which AbM has received from government, academics and NGOs, and a description of a significant

politically motivated attack on a particular informal settlement and its detrimental effects on the organisation and its members.

Chapter 6 presents a detailed description and analysis of the data collected on AbM. Data is presented following the analytical framework developed in Chapter 2, which includes the following sections: Personal Experiences and Background (PEB), Social Context, Resources, Sense of Agency, Reflection, and Action: Political Voice. Factors described in each section, are analysed as to how or whether they have an influence on the process of developing a political voice. This Chapter includes the communication processes studied and how ICTs appropriation and re-purposing developed within AbM.

Chapter 7 discusses the findings from data with particular regard to the different types of political voices among AbM members. Data shows that individual members have different levels of engagement with AbM activities. Moreover, members demonstrated distinct leadership skills, capabilities, experiences and degree of independence. These differences can have an influence in the development and expression of political voice. Based on that, a three-tier categorisation was devised to label members interviewed. The last part of this Chapter focuses on answering the research questions proposed for this study in terms of the findings described so far.

Finally, Chapter 8 draws general conclusions to the study. It starts by restating the research problem and how the study was conducted. The Chapter then provides a summary to the findings described on Chapter 7 and a statement on the contribution of the study. Chapter 8 also discusses the limitations of the study, and possible avenues for further research.

2. Literature Review

Introduction

This Chapter seeks to frame the research problem described in the previous Chapter, through theoretical and analytical perspectives derived from key bodies of literature: political voice, social movements and information communication technologies (ICTs).

Section 2.1 of this Chapter provides a definition of political voice and elaborates the various factors that have been identified as able to help or hinder its development in marginalised contexts. Shack dwellers are not directly addressed in this Chapter (but in Chapter 4). Yet, I provide here a more general analysis of marginality as a broader category within which shack dwellers can be located (*e.g.* in terms of their lack of access to public services and opportunities to express views on rights). The discussion includes underlying factors leading to the lack of political voice, such as internalized oppression, as well as how different fields study how the marginalised (could) develop a political voice.

Section 2.2 explores the literature on social movements, as a context in which marginalised individuals engage in collective action and could potentially develop a political voice. Communication is identified as an important aspect of this context, including internal and external communication between participants and external supporters of a social movement, and the channels through which it can take place (*i.e.* face-to-face and ICT-mediated).

Section 2.3 provides an overview of empirical and theoretical insights into ICT adoption by the marginalised, focusing in particular on the internet and mobile phones. It includes an examination of the factors that led to growing adoption of mobile phones in the developing world. Yet, ICTs' primary usage among the marginalised is to stay in touch with family and friends, and the technology is not fulfilling the expectations that it would create new business and political opportunities for the marginalised.

Section 2.4 then focuses on ICT adoption in the context of social movements. It presents examples of the important roles played by the internet and mobile phones in some social movements, including mobilization of participants and supporters, and publicising their cause. Nevertheless, the examples suggest that there is still limited information on the use of ICTs by marginalised individuals within these social movements.

Finally, section 2.5, presents an analytical framework to study the process of developing a political voice by the marginalised and the role of ICT within this process. The framework outlines 6 categories aggregating concepts and findings coming from different bodies of literature (*e.g.* empowerment, conscientization, participation, and ICTs). I have created these categories by grouping related concepts in the literature, as an approach to study the process of developing a political voice and ICTs, by marginalised individuals.

2.1 Political Voice

Political voice can be defined as any activity in which individuals and organisations convey views, needs, preferences and dissent to government and government officials (Schlozman *et al.*, 2005). Through political voice, individuals and groups can expose government failure, demand accountability, and attempt to influence government policy and actions (Schlozman *et al.*, 2012; Verba *et al.*, 1995).

Commonly political voice is identified with actions such as voting[5] or political participation. Political participation may also include participation in government institutions, contacting officials, joining a pressure group or organisation, protesting, boycotting, e-mail petitions, the hacking of Web sites, and generally expressing needs, preferences and demanding rights and government accountability (Devas and Grant,

[5] According to Schlozman *et al,* voting "is a blunt instrument of communication, conveying a voter's decision to support a particular candidate but, in the absence of an exit poll or other type of election follow-up, nothing about why the choice was made (2012, p.3). This form of political voice is thus, not covered by this study.

2003; Fung and Wright, 2001; Macedo *et al.*, 2005; Rodriguez, 2013; Schlozman *et al.*, 2012).[6]

Studies on political voice, or more specifically the use of the term of voice, often draw on Hirschman's (1970) classic typology of "exit, voice and loyalty" (Appadurai, 2004; Beall, 2005b; Goetz and Gaventa, 2001; Mitlin and Bebbington, 2006; Walker, 2009). According to Hirschman, people tend to choose between three possible alternatives – exit, voice and loyalty – as a reaction to the deterioration of an organisation that affects them. An individual may choose to exit in favour of another organisation; challenge the organisation by voicing their discontent; or choose to stay loyal to the organisation and suppress their dissatisfaction. Beall summarises that:

> "Hirschman suggests that when there is an evident choice, people usually choose to exit over voice because it involves less uncertainty and investment, requiring only the search for a better alternative. Loyalty in the form of inertia is often more likely when the cost of exit is high" (2005b, p.23).

Loyalty can be seen as a simple choice of not expressing political voice. Political voice is also voluntary, and individuals may have their own reasons as to why not engage in expressing a political voice. However, Schlozman *et al* describe that voluntary political activity:

> "…implies that unequal political voice derives from differences in the motivation to be active. However, inequalities of political voice also reflect differences in the resources of education, income, knowledge, skills, and social ties that foster political participation" (2012, p.112).

There are, different bodies of literature using Hirschman's theory in the context of the marginalised. A commonly used approach, for instance, describes that the marginalised not only have inadequate access to basic infrastructure and service provision by the state, but fall short of means or channels to demand the assets that are important to them (Appadurai, 2004; DFID, 2000; Macedo *et al.*, 2005; Walker, 2009). Moreover, the marginalised lack the means to exit to alternatives (Walker,

[6] Yet, as oppose to Macedo *et al*, this research does not see "simply talking to a neighbour across a backyard fence" as a form of political voice (2005, p.7).

2009). While groups with higher income have the luxury of exit, for the marginalised – being highly dependent on services provided by monopoly-based public institutions (de Wit and Berner, 2009; Robins *et al.*, 2008) – exit is not a viable option and for this reason are often forced to remain loyal or simply cease to use public services (Goetz and Gaventa, 2001).

In many parts of the world loyalty, or what can be at times described as dependency relationships, is observable in systems of political clientelism and patronage.[7] These dependencies represent one of the most prominent and recurrent routes for the marginalised to access public services (Auyero, 2000; de Wit and Berner, 2009; Robins *et al.*, 2008).[8] However, patronage relations inhibit the development of political voice, and perpetuate inequality inside existing social structures (Botes and van Rensburg, 2000).

Yet marginalisation goes beyond lack of access to public services. Marginalisation is often used to describe socio-economic exclusion (Young, 1992), but in this dissertation the focus is on political marginality. In this context, the term marginalised is used to refer to the individuals (and groups) who lack opportunities – as well as the confidence, and resources such as skills, funds, media knowledge – to voice their concerns and needs (Beall, 2005b; Devas and Grant, 2003; Goetz and Gaventa, 2001; Mitlin, 2004) in those spheres that matter to them (Germani, 1980).

Low levels of political voice by the marginalised have been observed across the globe.[9] Individual or group characteristics such as gender, age, income, religion, ethnicity, race, culture as well as more complex power relations – *e.g.* traditional structures of

[7] Political clientelism and patronage are essentially the same thing. It "involves asymmetric but mutually beneficial relationships of power and exchange, a non universalistic quid pro quo between individuals or groups of unequal standing" (Roniger, 2004, p.353). Often within poor communities in Latin America (Auyero, 2000) and Africa (de Wit and Berner, 2009; Huchzermeyer, 2004), clientelism and patronage are particularized by the "exchange of votes and support for goods, favours, and services between the poor and the elites" (Auyero, 2000, p.19).

[8] See examples of patronage relationships inside informal settlements in South Africa, on Chapter 4, section 4.1.1.

[9] See, for example, work by Gaventa (2002, 2006) on invited and claimed spaces; Jo Beall (2005b) on 'exit, voice and tradition'; and Narayan *et al* (2000) Voices of the poor: crying out for change'.

authority – can impact on the ability to express political voice (Cleaver, 2001; Devas and Grant, 2003; Goetz and Gaventa, 2001; Guijt and Shah, 1998). Furthermore, issues such as lack of time, access to information on rights; or being unable to decode government jargon on official documents (skills and knowledge) (Schlozman *et al.*, 2012; UN-HABITAT, 2006), may represent barriers to express political voice.

Some authors focused on studying how certain characteristics – such as the ones listed above – might affect the ability and desire to speak up (Cornwall, 2004; Freire, 1985a; Gaventa, 2002). For instance, Cornwall (2002a, 2004) states that different levels of expertise and power relationships, as well as low self-esteem, may be detrimental to participation. She explains:

> "Having a voice clearly depends on more than getting a seat at the table. In participatory arenas in which 'experts' are present, even the most well-equipped middle class layperson may end up feeling cowed. More so those who have spent their lives being on the receiving end of prejudice, and may, as Freire (1972) argued, have so internalized discourses of discrimination that they are barely able to imagine themselves as actors, let alone agents" (Cornwall, 2004, p.84).

Marginalised individuals – often suffering from internalized oppression (Cornwall, 2004; Gaventa, 2006) – frequently demonstrate lacking the ability and means to express their minds and wills (Mitlin and Bebbington, 2006; Prilleltensky and Gonick, 1996; Reinharz, 1994). Individuals might fail to express their views, or disagree with proposals that do not meet their needs; feel forced to accept poor quality services or what is decided on their behalf. Gaventa describes the way this happens:

> "Without prior awareness building so that citizens possess a sense of their own right to claim rights or express voice, and without strong capacities for exercising countervailing power against the 'rules of the game' that favour entrenched interests, new mechanisms for participation may be captured by prevailing interests" (2006, p.30).

The development of political voice by the marginalised has been studied from a variety of disciplinary angles. A number of different descriptions and conceptions have been

put forward. The concepts of voice, empowerment,[10] and participation have all been linked to each other, and often overlap within the conceptualisations from fields as disparate as social work, developmental psychology, and development studies (Carr, 2003; Cornwall, 2004; Gaventa, 2002; Gaventa and Cornwall, 2008; Goetz and Gaventa, 2001; Mitlin, 2004; Rich *et al.*, 1995; Servaes, 1996a).

The concept of conscientization, for instance, has been used in a number of fields to explain how political voice of the marginalised is developed (Carr, 2003; Gaventa and Cornwall, 2008; Gutierrez, 1994, 1995; Servaes, 1996c). Conscientization is a concept introduced by Paulo Freire's most celebrated work: Pedagogy of the Oppressed.[11] Freire considered the concept of conscientization – *conscientização* in Portuguese – as fundamental to the development of voice by the marginalised. [12] Conscientization translates to: to make aware or awakening of consciousness or critical conscious (Lloyd, 1972; Prilleltensky and Gonick, 1996; Yep, 1998). The marginalised, as knowing subjects and not recipients of knowledge, "achieve a deepening awareness both of the socio-cultural reality which shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality" (Lloyd, 1972, p.5).

To become aware of the sources of individual marginalisation is the first step towards the process of conscientization, but it is not conscientization in itself (Freire, 1979).

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[10] Often, the notion of empowerment is limited to the capacity to, and the creation or perception of, a capacity for effective action. Empowerment can refer to the development of an individual level of analysis; some authors will include concepts such as confidence and perceived opportunity (Slater and Tacchi, 2004), competences, emotions and feelings.

[11] Although Freire's work focused on education it is not considered a teaching method *per se*, but a theory of knowledge and an educational philosophy (Gadotti, 1994; Lucio-Villegas, 2009; Servaes, 1996a, 1996b).

[12] Freire used the term oppressed, instead of marginalised. Although in the context of this research both terms can be used to describe individuals lacking a political voice, much of the work of Freire described oppression as a concept that can only be understood at the level of 'recognition' by the oppressed (Freire, 1970, 1972). Yet, the concept of oppression, specifically the description of 'the oppressed' as used by Freire, has attracted some criticism. For instance, Freire seemed to have ignored gender, cultural issues, and problems of ethnic minorities in his analysis of oppression (Lucio-Villegas, 2009; Peters and Chimedza, 2000). I have chosen to use marginalised, instead of oppressed, due to Freire is over simplification – or homogenization – of what it means to be oppressed. He pays little attention to that fact that, for instance, those who appear oppressed, "may in fact express (at least some) power in more subtle ways, such as sabotage, non-cooperation, and the secret observance of a distinct culture and identity" (Blackburn, 2000, p.10).

Similar to empowerment (Carr, 2003), conscientization is not a stage to be achieved, but it represents a continuous and active process of investigation, understanding, of making decisions, and acting (Freire, 1985b; Lucio-Villegas, 2009; Naidoo, 2001). Freire describes conscientization as a cycle of "action and reflection" through which the marginalised become active agents of change (Freire, 1972).[13]

Theorists of empowerment, use the conscientization cycle to explain the dynamic, and on-going process of empowerment and development of political voice (Drury *et al.*, 2005; Gutierrez, 1994, 1995; Rees, 1998). Political voice, in this context, is action. Action is a product, but also leads to further reflection, which again leads to action, in a continuous cycle (Blackburn, 2000; Freire, 1979, 1983). In the community psychology, the conscientization cycle has been used to study marginalisation and activism, for instance, among young African Americans (Prilleltensky, 2003; Prilleltensky and Gonick, 1996; Sonn and Fisher, 2005; Watts *et al.*, 2003).

Work by Watts and colleagues has attempted to describe the process of developing a political voice by formalising and elucidating a conscientization cycle of action and reflection and influences upon it by numerous factors. Watts and colleagues refer to this process as the theory of sociopolitical development (SPD) (Watts and Abdul-Adil, 1998; Watts and Flanagan, 2007; Watts and Serrano-García, 2003; Watts *et al.*, 2003). SPD "is the process by which individuals acquire the knowledge, analytical skills, emotional faculties, and the capacity for action in political and social systems necessary to interpret and resist [marginalisation]" (Watts *et al.*, 2003, p.185). SPD provides a model to identify the factors involved in the development of an individual's awareness of *internalized oppression*, moving from the "uncritical acceptance of a status of inferiority to challenging the status quo" (Sonn and Fisher, 2005', p. 357).

[13] Applying this view to education, for example, Freire proposed that engaging 'students' and teachers in a debate 'between equals', students would have the opportunity to think critically about themselves and their reality. Through 'action and reflection' about their reality, students would progress from a passive receiver of knowledge to an active agent of change (Craig and Mayo, 2004; Merrett, 2000).

A review of the different bodies of literature mentioned above, offer useful concepts which contribute to building up an understanding of the process of developing a political voice. The concepts and findings coming out of these different fields, together with grassroots social movement studies (described next), will be reviewed in section 2.5 of this Chapter to build an analytical framework for the process of developing a political voice within a marginalised grassroots organisation.

2.2 Social movements

Marginalised individuals and groups have, in many cases, attempted to overcome their lack of individual political voice by engaging in collective action. Collective action means individuals contributing, in different ways, to a collective endeavour (Medina, 2007; Rodriguez, 2013). Collective action, in this sense, has been defined as:

> "a set of actions decided and played out by individuals forming part of more or less organized groups, [it] can be thought of as systems of action. They include the individuals exhibiting similar behavior in specific events, as well as the purposive orientations built on social relations within a field of opportunity and constraint" (Rodriguez, 2013, p.1055).

Collective action, for the marginalised, has often meant joining or starting grassroots movements. Grassroots movements offer a legitimate source of power for the marginalised to speak out (Mitlin and Bebbington, 2006).

Definitions of grassroots movements often overlap with definitions of social movements. Social movements, as well as grassroots movements, can emerge out of informal networks, or popular mobilisation, where individuals or groups share similar concerns and identities, and are collectively engaged towards a common goal (Cornwall, 2002b; Diani, 2003; Shaw, 1994). Historically, social movements have provided an important vehicle for the mobilization of citizens into political participation. According to Schlozman *et al.*:

> "For groups whose social and economic disempowerment tends to restrict their conventional political access, then, a social movement can serve as an alternative means for gaining and expressing political voice, thereby potentially mitigating the impact of inequality upon democratic participation."(Schlozman *et al.*, 2005, p.61)

A number of social movements, around the globe are attempting to foster bottom-up initiatives by including or channelling the voice of the marginalised (Mitlin and Bebbington, 2006; Phillips, 1995; Ruland, 1984). However, including and channelling the voice of the marginalised, does not mean that social movements are necessarily composed of marginalised members. Although the term grassroots can be a changeable term (Batliwala, 2002), it is used in this dissertation to refer to movements of, for, and by marginalised members. However, much of the literature on social movements can be applied to grassroots movements, and its practices have meaningful value for this analysis (as it will be reviewed throughout this Chapter).

Communication is central to relationships both within and across social movements (Mische, 2003). Social ties between participants of social movements are important for collective processes (Castells, 1997; Diani, 2003; Mische, 2003). Communication is critical for organisation and mobilisation activities (Haug, 2013).

Communication is also important for the creation and expansion of social capital. Communicating the hardship helps to elicit support and can bring the resources needed to support the activities and goals of the social movement – in this way communication can build interpersonal social relations. Resources include the skills and knowledge gained through interpersonal social relations, as well a physical capital (*e.g.* funds, transportation, equipment) (Warschauer, 2003b). However, the literature also emphasises that there are costs for organisations associated with a growing social capital. These costs include power struggles and gatekeeping by individuals who are in influential positions (Willem and Scarbrough, 2006).[14]

Moreover there is limited data on the social relationships or communication process involved in the mobilization and organisation of social movements activities (Oliver and Myers, 2003). While traditional channels and methods such as meetings and coalition building are still used (Polletta, 2002), there is an increased "coordination of action by organisations and individuals using digital media to create networks,

[14] See further discussion in this Chapter, on section 2.5.3.

structure activities, and communicate their views directly to the world" (Bennett and Segerberg, 2012, p.749).

This means that, collective action within social movements is being shaped by the degree of technology-enabled networking (Livingston and Asmolov, 2010), which can be individually centred (Bennett and Segerberg, 2012) instead of a collective undertaking.

Literature on communication processes has focused on mediated communication (such as ICTs based, see section 2.4, below), leaving face-to-face communication processes (*e.g.* meeting, assemblies) frequently understudied (Haug, 2013).

Face-to-face communication provides a basis for the development of trust, social bonds and identity among participants of social movements (Diani, 2000; Milan, 2013; Summers-Effler, 2002). Kavada, for instance, explains that:

> "face-to-face meetings and street demonstrations can counterbalance [dispersion of activists in the online realm] by bringing activists together in the same physical space at the same time. This strengthens feelings of belonging as it makes the collective a tangible reality, something that's more difficult to achieve online" (2010, p.115).

A number of studies have described that access to, and use of, technology often reflects and reinforces patterns of existing political behaviour (Brodock, 2010; Mercea, 2012; Schlozman *et al.*, 2012).[15] Consequently, studies on mediated communication[16] within social movements, which ignore face-to-face communication, will provide a blinkered analysis of the process of developing a political voice.

Although mediated communication does not replace face-to-face communication (Mudhai, 2004), technologies such as ICTs may improve the effectiveness of communication among social movements members and external supporters (Diani,

[15] See section 2.3.1.

[16] In this particular case, literature mainly refers to as ICTs mediated communication.

2000; Loudon, 2010). ICTs are "changing the ways in which activists communicate, collaborate and demonstrate" (Garrett, 2006, p.202), while contributing to the creation of new kinds of social movements and activism[17] (Joyce, 2010; Langman, 2005; Sassen, 2012; Zuckerman, 2010). ICTs decrease the costs of participation and increase opportunities of social movements expressing political voice (Bartlett, 2007; Hale *et al.*, 1999; Hara and Estrada, 2005; Sassen, 2012; Wasserman, 2005).

Communication within and by social movements, including face-to-face and ICT-mediated, as well as internal and external, forms an important aspect of this research. Communication activities are therefore integrated in the analytical framework proposed in section 2.5 of this Chapter. Before that, I provide a review of relevant ICT literature in the context of the marginalised.

Further literature on the collective processes and the motivations behind engaging with social movements are reviewed in this Chapter, with regard to the analytical framework designed for this dissertation.

2.3 ICTs: adoption by the marginalised

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) is the term used to describe a variety of technological media such as "computer hardware and software, digital broadcast technologies, telecommunications technologies such as mobile phones, as well as electronic information resources such as the world wide web and CDRoms" (Selwyn, 2004, p.346). Until the late 1990s most analysis of ICTs referred to internet applications (Hermanns, 2008; Unwin, 2009b).[18] However, in the 2000s studies

[17] Activism is often described as engaging in expressing political voice, generally through taking action in form of campaigns for social and political change (Joyce, 2010; Kavada, 2010; Shaw, 2013).

[18] Internet is taken to mean computer-mediated access to the World Wide Web; and does not include access through smartphones and other devices.

brought into the discussion the proliferation of mobile phones, and more recently the convergence of both technologies in smart phones.[19]

Since the 1990s, the potential role of ICTs in changing social, economic, and political contexts has received considerable attention.[20] In the mid-1990s, for example, government agencies, NGOs, and other organisations claimed the internet could bridge the social gap[21] (Norris, 2001; Selwyn, 2006; Warschauer, 2008). Over the last decade, mobile phones inspired similar assumptions (Cullum, 2010; Stump *et al.*, 2008; Zuckerman, 2010). While there are few studies on the subject (Rheingold, 2008; UNDP, 2012), findings indicate that mobile phones are not necessarily improving social inclusion, despite wide adoption and increasing numbers of phones in circulation.[22]

There is a vast literature on ICTs use by the marginalised, including for example the digital divide and ICTs for development (ICT4D), which is relevant to this discussion. For this reason, internet and mobile phone technologies are reviewed in the next subsections, looking at relevant aspects of the debate on meaningful use of ICTs by the marginalised.

2.3.1 The internet

In recent decades Internet usage has increased dramatically in many poor developing countries. In Latin America, for instance, from 2000 to 2012 internet usage increased 1,310.8%[23] (Internet World Stats, 2012) and cybercafés have become a common

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[19] Smartphones are not covered by this research. At the time of fieldwork, in 2010, they were rarely available among poor South Africans (see Chapter 6, section 6.1.3.1).

[20] Other technologies, such as radio, are considered key medium for the marginalised to acquire local news, information, and question and answer programs, among others (Goetz and Gaventa, 2001). However, this is not covered in this study.

[21] Social gap or inequality is an often-used term to describe a number of unequal relations and status within society. It is a very broad and fuzzy term, even within the digital divide literature (Devas and Grant, 2003).

[22] Political voice is one aspect of social inclusion. Hence, discussion on social inclusion is relevant to this research.

[23] From approximately 18 million users in 2000 to 255 million users in 2012 – representing a 42.9 % population penetration (Internet World Stats, 2012).

feature of many towns and even small villages in the region (Robinson, 2006). The whole continent of Africa has had the highest growth of internet usage since the year 2000: 3,606.7%[24] (Internet World Stats, 2012). Even with this high growth rate, by the end of 2010 internet user penetration in Africa reached only 9.6% (Internet World Stats, 2012). Although internet access is becoming easier and cheaper for the poor in developing countries, digital inclusion is a long way off because of the overall low penetration (May, 2010).

Data on the internet digital divide shows that individual citizen's access to this technology is distributed unevenly, both socially and geographically (Selwyn, 2004; van Dijk, 2005). This uneven distribution is associated with education, age, class, income, occupation, gender and race (DiMaggio and Hargittai, 2001; Norris, 2001). Other analyses included factors such as language, availability of traditional mass media (*e.g.* newspaper and radio), GDP, and level of freedom of expression/democratization (Norris, 2001).

For most of the 90s and early 2000s, studies on the digital divide, focused on access – physical and electronic – to computer-based technologies. In the late 90s, the concept developed beyond physical and electronic to include access to information, services, social capital, and other technologies (Avgerou and Madon, 2005).

The focus on access inspired a number of projects around the world directed at bringing physical and electronic access to computers and internet. Digital inclusion projects – under the umbrella of ICT for development (ICT4D) – targeting poor communities in developing countries, attempted to engage individuals to use the technology for social inclusion or the creation of opportunities for the community as a whole.

[24] From approximately 4.5 million users in 2000 to 167.3 million users in 2012 – representing a 15.6% population penetration (Internet World Stats, 2012).

However, examples of digital inclusion projects, such as the provision of telecentres[25], have often failed or resulted in major gaps between actual use and original proposed goals (Dutton, 1999; James, 2005; Warschauer, 2003a, 2003c). Often, these initiatives failed to:

a) pay attention to existing social systems prior to the introduction of technology (James, 2005; Madon *et al.*, 2009; Robinson, 2006; Sey, 2011; Unwin, 2009a; Whyte, 2000);
b) consider social factors which affect the impact of technology (Warschauer, 2003c);
c) inspire valuable social activities by users as part of the learning and engagement process (Dutton, 1999; Robinson, 1998).

Moreover, technology provided was often unable, or inadequate, to address deeper social and societal problems, such as deficient infrastructure, education or opportunities, poverty, and other structural and institutional deficits (Pieterse, 2009).

Digital inclusion projects reinforced what some authors were already agreeing on: access to computers and internet does not equate use of computers and internet (James, 2005; Norris, 2001; Unwin, 2009a; Warschauer, 2003c). Moreover, physical access and use of these technologies, does not equate with meaningful use. Meaningful use – also referred to as meaningful access (Warschauer, 2002) – denotes the degree of control and choice over the technology, and its content, which enables an individual to use the technology in a way that is useful, significant, and has relevance to this individual and their specific realities (Bonfadelli, 2002; Orlikowski, 2000; Selwyn, 2004; Silverstone, 1996).

[25]There are many different definitions for telecentres, depending on its format, service offered, structure and organisation, as well as, place installed (can vary from community to community, country to country). Generally telecentres are described as physical centres providing shared public access to communication and information services using a variety of technologies including phone, fax, computers, as well as the internet (Whyte, 2000). In developing countries, telecentres are usually funded by the state – or through international donors and NGOs – and are often located poor communities or public spaces (*e.g.* public schools, public libraries; government buildings). These telecentres focus on providing access "to the Internet to those who would otherwise be deprived of the benefits of this technology" (James, 2005', p.114)

To achieve meaningful use other complex factors must be taken into account such as human, social and economic resources, relationships, community and institutional structures, and cultural influences (Brodock, 2010; Selwyn, 2004; Silverstone, 1996; van Dijk, 2005). In Warschauer's words:

> "What is most important about ICTs is not so much the availability of the computing device or the Internet line, but rather people's ability to make use of that device and line to engage in *meaningful* social practices" (2002) (emphasis added).

The meaningful use discussion added a different perspective to the digital divide debate, by starting to focus on individuals' perceived (or effective) access in practice, and not what was expected by theory. This included individual's views, choices, and potential consequences of engagement with technology (Selwyn, 2004; Silverstone, 1996; van Dijk, 2005).

While focusing on individuals, some authors recognized that, often, marginalised potential users do not foresee or feel able to use such technology (Avgerou and Madon, 2005; Madon *et al.*, 2009; Mehra *et al.*, 2004; Postma, 2001; Selwyn, 2004).[26]

Some authors started to focus on understanding the underlying reasons for individuals' and – groups of individuals' – engagement with the internet through the analysis of economic, cultural, and social capital/resources (Selwyn, 2004). Murdock and Golding, for instance, suggested that in order to understand how the internet shapes "patterns of participation and exclusion, it is essential to explore gender and generational dynamics within households, looking particularly at divisions of labour and patterns of power and authority" (Murdock and Golding, 2004, p.251).

Selwyn, Murdock and Golding's conceptualization of ICTs offers a rich approach to understand the issues of the ICTs appropriation. There are, however, other factors that

[26] The concept *refuseniks* – meaning individuals who "choose not to engage with ICT for ideological reasons, despite being able to in practice" (Selwyn, 2004, p. 348) – do not seem appropriate to apply for the marginalised. In Selwyn's (2006) study entitled: *'Digital divisions or digital decision? A study of non-users and low-users of computers'* some individuals interviewed claimed that their continued non-engagement with computers involved a lack of relevance or "life-fit" of computers into their lives.

should be taken into account, when addressing marginalised individuals. For instance, internet content is overwhelmingly in English and relevant to 'Western' contexts (Hargittai, 1999; Warschauer, 2008), and for this reason automatically excludes poor marginalised individuals who do not identify themselves with much of the content (Gigler, 2004; Pieterse, 2009). Warschauer (2008) takes this factor into consideration when creating a framework of four general areas: physical resources, digital resources, human resources, and social resources. Table 1, below, describes each of these different forms of resources.

Table 1 Different Forms of Technological Capital: following Warschauer

Physical resources	Refers to the basic device (*e.g.* computer) and internet connection (via dialup; wired or wireless broadband link). It includes possible variations in the quality of computers and of internet connections, enabling diverse types of ICT usage.
Digital resources	Refers to the content that is available online. This includes the content diversity available online and its relevance (*e.g.* urban content vs rural communities; content from developed countries vs users from developing countries). Content diversity is also related to language diversity, with an uneven amount of Web content available only in English. "The transition from the first-generation World Wide Web, which facilitated browsing but left writing and publishing difficult, to what has been called Web 2.0, which more easily allows writing, content creation, and publishing through blogs, wikis, and other means, can be helpful in reducing the vast divide in digital resources, if worldwide initiatives are able to mobilize local communities to produce their own Web content" (Warschauer, 2008, p.143).
Human resources	"[R]efers to the knowledge and skills required for meaningful use of computers and the Internet, which include both the traditional literacies of reading and writing, as well as a set of new digital literacies. The latter include computer literacy (the fluency, comfort, and skill in using a computer and its programs); information literacy (the ability to find, critique, evaluate, and deploy information from online and other sources); multimedia literacy (the ability to produce and publish quality work that draws on texts, images, sounds, and video); and computer-

	mediated communication literacy (the interpretation, writing, and thinking skills necessary to communicate effectively in, or help arrange and manage, various types of synchronous and asynchronous online interaction)" (Warschauer, 2008, p.144).
Social resources	"[R]efers to the social relations, social structures, and social capital that exist to support effective use of ICT in families, communities, and institutions. (…) [S]uccessful incorporation of ICT inevitably depends on multifaceted and ongoing reform of social relations and incentives rather than merely on a one-time infusion of equipment" Warschauer, 2008 #140`, p.144}.

Source: (Warschauer, 2008).

Building on Warschauer's framework, van Dijk (2005), suggests reframing the study of the digital divide by putting less emphasis on technology – and what technology is expected to achieve – and focusing on the causal factors on the context of the marginalised. According to van Dijk (2005), digital divide discussions still have limited data on relationships, ties, and networks which affect individuals (and groups). The author further proposes that a broader digital divide discussion needs to include, what he calls, a "relational view". The relational view rejects the common digital divide analysis that individual attributes explain gaps in ICT usage. The relational view does not see technologies as likely solutions to socio and economic inequalities, neither to the lack of political participation. Instead, the relational view suggests that an analysis of the digital divide should include an emphasis on the "bonds, relationships, interactions, and transactions between people" (van Dijk, 2005, p.11).

Empirical studies of internet use by the poor show distinctive patterns of interaction with the technology. In Ghana, for instance, Burrell (2009) found a difference in understanding and using the internet to access information by youth from poor urban communities in Accra. Burrell's research showed that the range of media these youth accessed on the web – apart from email and chat – was quite limited. They rarely used search engines but tended to rely instead on URLs forwarded by friends. The studied group frequently exchanged URLs which interested them. The exchange of information between personal contacts was more important than doing research on search engines:

> "However, these Internet users did not see that their Internet skills were lacking: for them, chatting and email, and collecting foreign pen pals in particular, were what the internet was all about. It was through personal contacts, not depersonalized information, that both entertainment and real opportunities for personal development could be found" (Burrell, 2009, p.157).

Burrell found that there was a correlation between these users of internet cafés and a higher level of education. She also observed that these users attempted to reduce their spending on items such as transportation and books to save and use the money in internet cafes (Burrell, 2009). This suggests that when motivation to use technology was present, individuals found ways to overcome limited economic circumstances.

The type of digital divide described above, seem to differ significantly from the mobile phone digital divide. The growing mobile phone adoption, and its implication is reviewed next.

2.3.2 Mobile Phones

More recently mobile phones and the internet, have to some degree converged owing to the overlap of some features and technologies (Unwin, 2009b), now offered through more advanced handset and networks – *e.g.* Smartphones and 3G.[27] However, voice calls and Short Message Service (SMS) "remain the bulk of most people's mobile behaviour" (Ling and Donner, 2009, p.71), and this is the case for the majority of the poor in developing countries (Molony, 2008; UNDP, 2012). [28]

In 2010, a report by the International Telecommunication Union (International Telecommunication Union (ITU), 2010) estimated that there would be approximately 5.3 billion mobile phones subscriptions worldwide, and in the developing world,

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[27] Smartphones or third generation (3G) phones combine usual mobile phones features (calls and SMS) with digital media and Internet access, enabling browsing, email, chat, search, maps, *etc.*

[28] Mobile phones are changing rapidly, and there is a great advancement on mobile phone features, such as camera, video and Internet – including almost all available Internet tool accessed through computers. Despite no official data on the practice of 'beeping', some estimate numbers range between 20-30% (Donner, 2008b). For this reason, when discussing mobile phones, this research will only refer to its basic voice and SMS features, and practices such as 'beeping'.

penetration rates were expected to reach 68%.[29] More recent data shows that mobile phone penetration in 2013 reached 89% in developing world, and 63% in the African continent (International Telecommunication Union (ITU), 2013).

Mobile phone penetration is greater than that of internet and landlines in the developing world (Joyce, 2010; Mudhai, 2006). Mobile phone infrastructure is usually cheaper to install and maintain than the infrastructure of landlines (Cullum, 2010; Ling and Donner, 2009). For the poor in developing countries, who have suffered limited access to basic communications for decades (Abbott, 2001), mobile phones offer the immediate benefit of connectivity (Castells *et al.*, 2006; Ling and Donner, 2009). For most developing countries, mobile phones arrived to provide basic communication and became the natural substitute for the "inaccessible" landline (Barrantes, 2007).[30]

Rice and Katz point out that "in the developing world, it is the poorest segment of the population that is often the earliest adopter of mobile telephones" (Rice and Katz, 2003, p.602). Mobile phones are not as digitally divisive as the computer and internet – in terms of basic use (making calls) and access (Fortunati, 2003; Ling and Horst, 2011). Generally, mobile phone adoption is the result of individuals' realization of its straightforward use (*i.e.* no special training required) and the potential of this technology to help to arrange their daily affairs (Sey, 2011).

Beyond cheaper start up cost of acquiring a mobile phone (*e.g.* SIM[31] card, equipment) – compared to a computer and access to the internet – there are also other factors beyond costs that influenced mobile phone adoption. Unlike the internet, mobile phone basic usage – telephony – does not require a high degree of technical expertise (Stump *et al.*, 2008), or excludes illiterate users. Mobiles appear to be less affected by issues of language, race, class, occupation, and geography. Income levels have only a

[29] Mostly driven by the Asia and Pacific region (International Telecommunication Union (ITU), 2010).

[30] In many developing countries the landline is expensive and often the structure which supports it unavailable outside large urban centres. Moreover, landlines require a bank account and credit certificates which many marginalised individuals do not have (Barrantes, 2007).

[31] SIM stands for "subscriber identification module".

small impact on upkeep of mobiles, "pay as you go"[32] options allow spending control and do not require a good credit history (Gray, 2006; Mariscal *et al.*, 2007). Beyond basic call features, options such as SMS; the free practice of beeping (including Pre-Negotiated Instrumental Beeps – *e.g.* one beep means: meet at the pre-arranged place)[33]; and please call me (PCM) SMS[34], allow users to manage costs and be reachable. These practices often have local cultural conventions associated with their use, or assumptions by the person requesting a call back. These include: 'the rich guy pays' (*e.g.* employers are usually responsible to call employees back); friends and family (once the caller runs out of airtime); never beep to ask for a favour or "beep too much" (Donner, 2008b). Generally, these demonstrate that users tend to find innovative ways to operate mobile phones to suit their particular contexts (Brinkman *et al.*, 2009).

Independence and ownership also play a role in mobile phone preference. Mobile phones, for instance, offer independence of personal use to members of poor communities which is not available from telecentres, or internet accessible at community centres, enabling people to incorporate this technology into their activities and necessities (Mariscal *et al.*, 2007). Owning a mobile phone – especially a top branded one – has become a status symbol for many (Molony, 2008; Portus, 2008).

Similar to the expectations raised by the potential of the internet, mobile phones were hailed by some as the new hope for economic and social inclusion of the marginalised. Some authors went as far as to state that "the economic benefits of the spread of the mobile are double what they are in the rich world" (Nyíri, 2006, p.14). At the macro

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[32] Pay as you go is a often used term to refer to pre-paid systems, where credit (airtime) is purchased in advance of service use.

[33] Beeping or 'missed calling' or 'flashing' are all expressions used to denote a practice of calling a mobile phone and then hang up before it is answered. This way of using mobile phones helps users to save money and often send a message that – most of the time – was pre arranged. For further analysis on beeping see Donner (2008b), The Rules of Beeping: Exchanging Messages Via Intentional "Missed Calls" on Mobile Phones.

[34] In many developing countries, some phone companies offer a free SMS service called: 'Please call me' (PCM). These companies usually allow mobile users to send a number of such SMS per day – *e.g.*5 a day. More information on South Africa's PCM system available in the contextual background, Chapter 5, section 5.1.4.

level, some studies suggested that higher levels of mobile penetration would lead to a boost in GDP growth in low-income developing countries (Donner, 2008a; Nyíri, 2006), and would allow these countries to leapfrog telecommunication diffusion (Goggin and Clark, 2009).

At the micro level, the use of mobile phones by the poor has the potential, evidently, to save time and money when comes to travel (Gray, 2006; Molony, 2008). In some cases mobile phones can enhance contact with pre-existing business partners, suppliers, customers and to reach new markets (Brinkman *et al.*, 2009). However, "mobiles can enable economic activities that will lead to growth, but not directly create growth" (Donner, 2008c, p.34). The anticipated usage of mobile phones – for improving income, health, and politics – is not borne out by how users are in fact choosing to use this technology (Sey, 2011). Sey makes the general point:

> "Most approaches to technology appropriation recognize the existence of a gap between technology design and use. Although technologies are generally designed with particular purposes in mind, this often does not translate exactly to how consumers will use it. This is not just about a technology failing to meet user needs; there is an essential unpredictability about human interaction with technology that makes it difficult, if not impossible, to anticipate how users will choose to behave" (2011, p. 379).

For most of the poor in the developing world, mobile phone usage is less associated with business, and more with the intimate sphere[35] (Ling, 2008; Miller, 2006; Sey, 2006, 2011; Unwin, 2009b). From Asia to Sub-Saharan Africa, there is evidence that mobile phone communication is mainly used to reinforce bonds of family and friendship, *i.e.* within the intimate sphere, and is where this technology has its main impact (Ling, 2008; Molony, 2006; Palackal *et al.*, 2011; UNDP, 2012). In Philippine urban slums, wives send text messages to their husbands to show their apprehension regarding their safety; mothers use mobile phones to keep track of their children (Portus, 2008). In Sudan, mobile phones are used to "forge, re-establish or reinforce these bonds" (Brinkman *et al.*, 2009, p.75). As in many countries in Africa, when Sudanese move to

[35] Intimate sphere mainly refers to personal links, such as family and friends. A similar and widely referenced theory in the ICTs literature is the 'weak ties and strong ties', by Granovetter (1973).

urban centres to work, mobile phones provide important channels to maintain family bonds (Brinkman *et al.*, 2009).

However, there are socio-cultural factors that can contribute to unexpected outcomes of mobile phone use. For instance, while mobile phones facilitate the enhancement of family bonds it also increases or creates financial pressure. Through mobile phones, individuals keep direct contact with loved ones; share news; give support in times of crises. In some cases, mobile phones increase the social pressure on individuals to call relatives more often (Molony, 2008). In many parts of Africa, this has become a particular burden to individuals considered to be the breadwinner or the one with more resources (Donner, 2008b; Sey, 2006). The breadwinner is not only expect to call, and bear the cost of call, but is often reminded through their phones to send money to relatives.

In Jamaica, mobile phones facilitated and expanded financial support networks between families and other relations, *e.g.* boyfriend and girlfriend, that are crucial for some poor groups (Horst and Miller, 2006). In the Philippines, families became so "hooked" on mobiles that they felt compelled to shift funds from important household needs to buy airtime for their phones (Portus, 2008). While in most developed countries household spending on mobile phones are around 3%, in many Africa countries the percentage varies between 6 to 10% (Gray, 2006).

In Caribbean societies Horst and Miller (2006) observed that mobile phones re-enforced well-established networks of communication. The technology in itself has not changed the way these links are created, just facilitated interactions that are typical of these societies. Ling and Campbell point out that established solidarity and cohesion within pre-existing groups, such as family and friends, "is carried over into the mediated interaction of the group" (2008, p. 155).

Even though family and friends represent the bulk of mobile phone use for the poor, there is evidence of the use of mobile phones beyond the intimate sphere. In Jamaica, over three quarters of phone numbers saved in mobile phones contact lists, belong

business related or acquaintances contacts. In a phenomenon that Horst and Miller (2006) called “link up” – which actually precedes mobile phones – a number of poor Jamaicans have an extensive network of numbers for “possible future contact”:

> “Most people’s phone lists included numbers that represent potential services, such as someone working at Western Union or a person who can braid hair, but also others that represent possible liaisons that might or might not include sexual partners. In practice, many of these initial contacts were vague and ill-defined” (Horst and Miller, 2006, p.50).

This example bears similarity to informal associations and networks for the poor in the developed world. The difference, however, is the level of dependence on these links and frequency of contact (Narayan, 2000).

Moreover, the use of mobile phones for communication within the intimate sphere, gives a clue about the nature and dynamics of interactions, which support this channel of communication. Trustworthy relationships seem to represent the foundation and motivation behind mobile phone use. In the business context, for instance, Molony (2006) describes that in Tanzania, mobile phones allow farmers to access information on supply and demand from traders, but this happens only when there is an established relationship based on trust. The author further explains that face-to-face relationship is often favoured over using mobile phones, or technology is employed after a trustworthy face-to-face relationship is established (Molony, 2006). Mobile phones, for the poor in Africa, might support but not replace existing socio-political networks and face-to-face communication (Mudhai, 2004).

2.4 The role of ICTs for political voice

More recently debate has focused on ICTs’ potential to increase political participation (Albrecht, 2006; Castells *et al.*, 2006; Hermanns, 2008; Papacharissi, 2002; Selwyn, 2004) and collective action (Hacker and Dijk, 2000; Hara and Estrada, 2005; Rheingold, 2002; Suárez, 2006). ICTs can provide tools to overcome geographical distances, strengthen networks, and increase the speed of interactions (Rheingold, 2002, 2008; Rodriguez, 2013). Some claim that these tools have the potential to channel political

information (Hindman, 2009), to reduce the cost of conventional forms of participation, and to create new low-cost forms of participation (Donner, 2008c; Garrett, 2006; Papacharissi, 2002).

Yet, access to ICTs does not equate to meaningful use of ICTs for political voice (Margolis and Resnick, 2000). A number of studies on grassroots social movements have attempted to identify meaningful use of ICTs by the marginalised. I review some of the relevant findings of below.

2.4.1 Political voice and the internet

Some commentators assert that the internet has a transformative potential, for example, to increase democratization or political transformation (Abbott, 2001). Some claims include:

- The internet can enhance service delivery; create opportunities for government transparency and citizen *sousveillance*[36] (Cullum, 2010; UNDP, 2002, 2012);
- The "information available via the internet has the potential to allow the public to become more knowledgeable about public affairs" (Norris, 2001, p.97);
- Citizens would have easier channels to provide feedback (*e.g.* via email; online discussion lists; chat rooms); direct participation in decision-making (*e.g.* online consultation and voting); and easy access to official documents and services (Hacker and Dijk, 2000; Hague and Loader, 1999; Norris, 2001);
- The internet was expected to channel the voice of the people who felt voiceless (Gillmor, 2006).

Despite all the benefits that the internet was expected to bring for democratic participation, traditional channels for expressing citizens voice, such as voting and party membership, had a record low in the 2000s in many well established

[36] "Sousveillance" is a term coined by Steve Mann, to describe "watchful vigilance from underneath" (Cullum, 2010). It is often used to describe monitoring and surveillance of government and private institutions – including exposing corruption and police brutality.

democracies (Pew Research Centre, 2006; Sloam, 2014). Yet, some authors believe that this has been balanced by growing demands from civil society (including social movements) for a more deliberative democracy (Evans, 2010; Stie, 2008).

In this context, ICTs may strengthen and broaden the activities of civil society organisations (Mercer, 2004; Norris, 2001), by enabling new and better forms for collaboration and collective action.

Since the 1990's, some social movements have used the internet to pursue digital politics (Norris, 2001) or digital activism[37] (Joyce, 2010; Kavada, 2010; Shaw, 2013), which include using tools such as: mailing lists, online campaigns, forums, etc. According to some authors, the internet offered a platform for social movements to: legitimize their existence and provide visibility (Hara and Estrada, 2005); access, communicate with, and mobilize like-minded groups (Abbott, 2001; Shaw, 2013); decentralize and expand organisational structures (Kavada, 2010; Rheingold, 2002).

Social movements' websites provided an opportunity for self-representation, as an "electronic business card" to present the identity, and past and current activities (della Porta, 2011, p. 808). Email distribution lists can serve as an important channel between social movements and external supporters, media, and other networks (Wasserman, 2005).

The internet has created new opportunities for social movements. According to Wasserman "these technologies have been used for social movements in international contexts to publicise their causes." Moreover, he adds, the internet has provided an alternative space, one that is not the "public sphere [which] has been rationalised by the state and the market" (2005, p.180).

[37] Digital Activism "can be seen as the effective execution of a series of technological skills carried out to achieve a strategic goal" (Brodock, 2010, p.72).

Perhaps the most studied, and first case (Russell, 2005), is that of the Zapatista movement (Langman, 2005; Sassen, 2012).[38] The Zapatista movement, which refers to the *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional*' (EZLN) and other actors (*e.g.* academics, local and international NGOs), has benefited from using the internet. The Zapatista Movement has used the internet as a space to further their ideas and gather support (Russell, 2005). The internet has played a significant role in creating links between Chiapan civil society organisations and the Transnational Zapatista Solidarity Network (TZSN).[39] These local organisations fed those links with information and planned joint actions (Olesen, 2005; Ronfeldt *et al.*, 1998). The interpersonal connections and social capital, channelled through the internet, enabled the resources, funds and media coverage that was crucial for the Zapatista Movement's existence (Rodriguez, 2013).

The Zapatistas were characterized as a high-tech movement (Olesen, 2005; Rodriguez, 2004). However, the internet was not an instrument to which the EZLN, and its indigenous members, had access to initially. Mercer stated that:

> "the global Internet protest movement which emerged in the awake of the Zapatista uprising owed more to supporters outside of Mexico posting messages on behalf of the uprising than to the manipulation of the Internet by the indigenous themselves" (2004, p.51).

Digital activists, including academics, international organisations, and local NGOs – most of whom did not have access to this technology prior to the EZLN uprising (Copello, 2006) – were the ones responsible for expressing and representing the

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[38] On the 1st January 1994, the EZLN (Zapatista Army of National Liberation*)* – an armed organisation mostly composed of indigenous peasants – started an uprising Chiapas, Mexico. Although the EZLN started an insurgency with arms, that was meant only to get attention. They had a declaration – "*Declaracion de la Selva Lacandona*", demanding sufficient "work, land, shelter, food and health care for the indigenous people of Mexico; and they were reluctant about their rights of independency, liberty, democracy, justice and peace" (Rochlin, 1997, p.12). At the time, a network of academics, local and international NGOs, individuals activist and many others, joined forces in what was latter called the Zapatista Movement (Olesen, 2005). Their initial effort was to stop the Mexican government army actions to suppress the uprising, and tell the world about the human rights violations taking place in Chiapas.

[39] Olesen (2005) calls the transnational Zapatista solidarity network an empirical expression of a "transnational counterpublic", in which different actors across the globe are working together, incorporating causes into a broader struggle.

Zapatista's political voice online. This finding led to criticism of whether the Zapatista movement's online presence was representative of an elite-mediated democracy (Pickard, 2008), raising questions – for instance – about the inclusion, or independence, of the voice of marginalised indigenous.

Generally, research has found that individuals from a socio-economic elite are more likely to engage in digital activism, or digital political voice (Brodock, 2010; Schlozman *et al.*, 2012).[40] In developed countries, such as the United States of America, surveys have shown that digital political voice replicates the existing socio-economic stratification in offline participation (Norris, 2001; Papacharissi, 2002; Schlozman *et al.*, 2012). Likewise, a 2009 survey (Brodock *et al.*, 2009) found that, particularly in developing countries, digital activists are "likely to be prosperous, with their economic resources offering them a significant digital benefit" (Brodock, 2010, p.74).

Yet, a growing number of examples of online and offline activism, suggest a positive link between the use of certain digital networking tools and new forms of collective action (Bimber *et al.*, 2012; Haug, 2013). Recent events such as the Arab spring[41] and the Iranian green revolution[42], fuelled the discussion by including the role of social media in the political popular movements (Khondker, 2011; Morozov, 2011; Schlozman *et al.*, 2012). Facebook, twitter, blogs, as well as conventional media tools, such as radio and television, played a key role in creating channels where the rest of the world

[40] Brodock describes that: "[r]esearch indicates that economic differences limit not only access to technology but also the likelihood of an individual to take part in political activism. The 2009 Digital Activism Survey conducted by DigiActive, (…) found that digital activists, particularly in developing countries, are more likely than the population at large to be paying a monthly fee for home Internet access, to be able to afford a high-speed connection, and to work in a white-collar job with access to the Internet in the workplace" (2010, p.74).

[41] Arab Spring is generally referred to as "a series of anti-government uprisings in various countries in North Africa and the Middle East, beginning in Tunisia in December 2010" (Oxford English Dictionary).

[42] The Iranian Green Revolution, also nicknamed the "Twitter Revolution", were a series of protests following the 2009 Iranian Presidential election

was fed with images and statements; helped to coordinate many protests and activists' actions in the region.[43]

Bennett and Segerberg (2012) describe that the use of personalized media, associated with digitally mediated collective action, has been successful in scaling up mobilization and communicating simple political messages to the public. Bennett and Segerberg use the examples of Occupy Wall Street and Indignados, they explain:

> "political demands and grievances are often shared in very personalized accounts that travel over social networking platforms, email lists, and online coordinating platforms. For example, the easily personalized action frame 'we are the 99 per cent' that emerged from the US occupy protests in 2011 quickly travelled the world via personal stories and images shared on social networks such as Tumblr, Twitter, and Facebook" (2012, p.742).

In this sense, a different kind of social capital emerged. Social media helped to gather the support and the development of relationships with journalists, politicians, other network activists, non-activists and bystanders (Rodriguez, 2013; Tufekci and Wilson, 2012; Warschauer, 2008).

Social media platforms such as Facebook – together with mobile phones and face-to-face interactions – provided with the information and interpersonal communication which shaped how individuals decided to engage in the logistics and protests in Tahrir Square in Egypt (Tufekci and Wilson, 2012). Rodriguez (2013), refers to these as meaning networks, where not only information and communication occurs, but the sharing of cognitive frames, including identity, emotions, culture and collective sense making.

Yet, there is no evidence of broad use of these technologies by the marginalised. For instance, much of the discussion surrounding the so-called Arab spring, which begun in 2010, and the Iranian green revolution (between 2009 and 2010), focuses on digital activists – individuals, groups, and organisations – which have both easy access and

[43] There are a number of newspaper articles and more recent academic articles on the subject (Batty, 2011; Sangani, 2011). For academic articles see, for example, Khondker (2011) and Axford (2011).

experience using these technologies (*e.g.* social media technologies) (Axford, 2011; Lust and Wichmann, 2012; Morozov, 2011). Moreover, these examples offer a different perspective on the importance of technical skills for elite activists. As Brodock explains the case of Iran:

> "Although from the outside it appeared that opposition elements in Iran were quite strong, such impression may simply have been made because [digital activists] were more effective at broadcasting their message than were the more conservative citizens who supported the current regime" (2010, p.79).

Beyond issues of inclusion and self-representation, there are other concerns related to digital political voice. For instance, sustained collective action within social movements often relies on previous interactions, or existing ties instead of purely virtual ties (Diani, 2000). ICTs are used to reinforce existing ties – often face-to-face – based on, for instance, trust and collective identity (Diani, 2000; Tranvik, 2004).

Digital activism has also raised concerns about censorship and repressive surveillance by governments across the globe. Activist bloggers have been jailed or expelled from their countries; governments have shut down websites or trespassed individual privacy rights to collect data on activists' plans and actions (OpenNet Initiative, 2013; Vegh, 2003). According to Morozov:

> "The idea that the Internet favors the oppressed rather than the oppressor is marred by what I call cyber-utopianism: a naïve belief in emancipatory nature of online communication that rests on a stubborn refusal to acknowledge its downside"(2011, p.xiii).

Lastly, there is on-going debate over many issues related to mobilizing people, through the internet, for collective action online and offline. Issues such as the under what conditions are technologies relevant; which actors use or adapt which technologies; and how these interact with non-users, are still unclear to explain mobilization and collective actions within social movements (Rodriguez, 2013).

2.4.2 Political voice, social movements, and mobile phones

Like the internet, mobiles phones were expected to support democratization or democratic processes, for example, through promoting, improving, and monitoring electoral processes (Cullum, 2010; UNDP, 2012). Examples of crowdsourcing applications – *e.g. ushahidi*[44] – have been used in a number of projects focusing on government transparency, and accountability (Jeffery, 2011; Provost, 2011) for obtaining ideas, services or content through collective (mainly online) contributions.

Some authors described mobile phones as tools enabling the establishment of communication between citizens and governing institutions (UNDP, 2012; Wasserman, 2011).

Mobile phones can also, for instance, increase decentralization of information about government activities. This decentralization can lead to collectively mobilizing from exposing government corruption (Bailard, 2009) to major public protests (Diamond, 2012; Rheingold, 2008). Mattes, using survey data from Africa, correlated political behaviour with mobile phone usage (Mattes *et al.*, 2010).

Examples of bottom-up political mobilization attested to the potential of this technology (Suárez, 2006). Mobiles provide a channel for more reciprocity between individuals because, different from most internet tools, its basic features are often used for communication within individuals' personal networks. For instance, a recipient of an SMS from a known source (*e.g.* a friend, family member, work colleague) is more likely to react, by forwarding a message, or joining a demonstration, than a recipient of an SMS or email from an unknown source (Cullum, 2010; Hermanns, 2008).

[44] *Ushahidi* is a crowd-source software created in Kenya to monitor violence after the 2007 presidential election. Today, it is widely used on crisis information, election monitoring and many other projects around the globe. See www.ushahidi.com

This means that, by establishing easy communicative connections, mobile phones helped to create social capital. As the example of breadwinners and social support networks in some African countries and the Caribbean, mobile phones help people and social movements to "overcome interaction difficulties caused by spatial separation, which facilitates the obtaining of various kinds of support" (Chiumbu, 2012, p.200).

Mobile phones seem to be less affected by some of the factors that limit or disrupt the diffusion of the internet among the marginalised (Stump *et al.*, 2008), such as access to computers and internet connection and thus, increasing its potential as a primary platform for organising collective action for political participation. Social movements have benefited from mobile phone diffusion in terms of increased mobilization and broadened scope of action (Arsenault, 2006; Obadare, 2006). Tools such as FrontlineSMS[45] can help activists to mobilize support and inform other activists (Wasserman, 2011). Mobile phones ubiquity enhances the possibility of drawing in local participation, especially for marginalised individuals (and groups) (Mudhai, 2006).

A contested, but probably the first example of mobile phones being used to coordinate political activity, was the impeachment of President Estrada in 2001, in the Philippines (Cullum, 2010; Ling and Donner, 2009; Paragas, 2003; Rice and Katz, 2003). Ordinary individuals were transformed into broadcasters, by forwarding SMSes with political content (Paragas, 2003), leading to a series of demonstrations known as People Power II (PPII).[46]

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[45] FrontlineSMS is open source software for computers or mobile phones, which allows the exchange of information through SMS to and from a large number of mobile phones. See www.frontlinesms.com/

[46] Simple SMSs initially urged people to assemble at the same site that staged the People Power demonstrations 15 years earlier, which overturned the Marcos regime in 1986 (Pertierra *et al.*, 2002). Over the course of four days, more than 1 million protesters gathered. As it was later observed in other places, such as Spain, forwarding text messages through their networks and engaging with the action after receiving the SMS, was motivated (or enforced) because of personal ties (Suárez, 2006). At the time, however, the political situation in the Philippines might have played a bigger role than the use of text messaging (Ling and Donner, 2009; Paragas, 2003). President Estrada was facing corruption allegations and was going through a highly publicized impeachment process, until senators linked to the president forced the cessation of accusations in mainstream media (Rheingold, 2002). Immediately after, opposition leaders started broadcasting text messages, which together with a discontent middle to

Although mobile phones – and in particular SMS – are often portrayed as pivotal in the mass mobilization for the impeachment of Estrada (Cullum, 2010; Rheingold, 2002; Zuckerman, 2010), there is little evidence to support this statement. In reality SMS appeared to play a peripheral role compared to other communication channels (Paragas, 2003). According to a survey conducted by Pertierra *et al* (2002), between 14 to 30% of respondents received a mobilizing text messages. Traditional media, organised press conferences, public announcements were probably the main channel to mobilize (Pertierra, 2005), while mobile phones facilitated coordination between friends and family members (Paragas, 2003).

The PPII case is controversial in terms of the impact of mobile phones, and more specifically how 'popular' the protests actually were. Estrada was considered a popular president among the poor in the Philippines, and later attempts to reinstate him to power were unsuccessful. Controversially, The PPII appears to have been orchestrated by a stable middle class in the Philippines (Rafael, 2003), not by the large number of marginalised in the Philippines.

Since PPII, much has changed in terms of technology adoption, use, and expectations. Africans, for example, have been adopting mobile phones at a fast pace[47] and finding creative ways to adapt this technology, which led to claims of its potential to become a tool for democratic participation (Cullum, 2010; Ekine, 2010; Mudhai *et al.*, 2009; UNDP, 2012).

In 2010, residents protested in the streets of Maputo against rising utility, transport, and food prices. The protests allegedly had been organised by SMS messages, prompting the government to order "mobile providers to suspend text messaging services in an attempt to quell the protests" (Wasserman, 2011, p. 147). The protests, called "the bread riots", succeed in forcing the Mozambican government to cancel the

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upper class, culminated in thousands of people in the streets (Rheingold, 2002). It was clear that SMS did not cause the protest, but rather facilitated it (Ling and Donner, 2009; Paragas, 2003).

[47] As described in section 2.3.2, Africa has over 60% adoption (International Telecommunication Union (ITU), 2013).

rise in utility tariffs and reduce the prices of rice, sugar, and bread (The Economist, 2010). Rheingold (2002) refers to examples such as the bread riots and the PPII as "smart mobs". Smart mobs raised expectations of the potential of this tool for political action.

Mobile phones, together with social media, have worked as a catalyst for collective action that led to a number of protests, and uprisings. For instance, mobile phones were fundamental in the mobilization and organisation of people to protest in Tahrir Square in Egypt (Tufekci and Wilson, 2012). In places were smartphones were not widely available[48], basic feature mobile phones provided with the portability, pervasiveness, and possibility of immediate communication from one to many (Cullum, 2010). At a time when internet was not widely available, social movements have been able to mobilise activists and networks of support, through some of the basic features available in mobile phones (Chiumbu, 2012; Dawson, 2012; Rheingold, 2008).

However, similar to concerns over the internet as a platform for expressing political voice as outlined above, there is also scepticism about mobile use for political voice. Mobile phone networks are centralized by a few companies and can thus be more easily monitored and controlled by governments – as opposed to the decentralised internet (Zuckerman, 2010). There are a number of examples from across the world (*e.g.* Ethiopia, Mozambique, Egypt), where state authorities have temporarily shut down communication networks[49], or intercepted SMS messages (Morozov, 2011; UNDP, 2012). Activists are often concerned that their mobile phones might be monitored and tracked by government, preventing them from doing their work and creating anxiety (Cullum, 2010; UNDP, 2012).

[48] Also, at the time, some of these protests and uprising took place.

[49] According to Morozov: "It's possible to disconnect particular geographic regions or even parts of the city, For example, during the unsuccessful color revolution in Belarus in 2006, the authorities turned off mobile phone coverage in the public square where protesters were gathering, curbing their ability to communicate with each other and the outside world (the authorities claimed that there were simply too many people using mobiles on the square and the mobile networks couldn't cope with the overload)" (2011, p.175).

The debate on how mobile phones are mediating political voice has widened. Similar to the discussion of protest and internet use by marginalised individuals, Wasserman (2011) criticizes two aspects of the current discourse:

a) how citizens use mobile phones to produce content for mainstream media – or are given voice through these channels – instead of transgressing these channels and norms by creating their own terms to enter the political debate;
b) if it "constitute[s] a threat to political participation and the exercise of citizenship?" (Wasserman, 2011, p.155).

Overall, there is little consensus regarding the role of mobile phones for political voice, and even less so in the context of marginalised individuals. We know, for instance, that in South African social movements have been adopting mobile phones to mobilize participants (Chiumbu, 2012). Popular uprisings are sprouting in many parts of Asia, demanding more democratic institutions, or even overthrowing long-standing dictators (*e.g.* Tunisia and Egypt). Yet, there is limited information about how marginalised participants in these different social movements are engaging with this technology. Berdou, for instance, explains that despite mobile phone availability, many individuals still experience limitations in the way they are able to use these tools for political engagement:

> "People cannot read or analyse information on small mobile screens and they cannot use their phone to deliberate, discuss or contest the issues at hand with others" (2014, p.5).

The discourse is often centred on access, adoption, use, adaptation, and economic factors, but ignores the different contexts in which, for instance, political action takes place (Axford, 2011; Wasserman, 2011).

2.5 Developing an analytical framework

The literature review above has provided a wide variety of concepts, analyses and findings related to ICTs, political voice, and marginalised individuals and groups. There is evidence in many cases of a lack of political voice among marginalised communities

and also of limited ability to make meaningful use of ICTs. Very little research has focused directly on the connection between these two phenomena but rather literature from a range of diverse fields has contributed isolated insights into aspects of the topic. Thus, a new approach is proposed here, drawing on and extending these insights in a way that focuses specifically on the development of political voice among marginalised groups and the role of ICT within that process.

The next sections outline categories to structure and organise the concepts and factors that influence the construction and development of a political voice, including the potential role of ICTs in this process. These categories are based on, and distilled on the different bodies of literature, including empowerment, conscientization, participation, sociopolitical development (SPD), ICTs, and social movements.

2.5.1 Personal Experiences and Background (PEB)

An individual's experiences and background plays a critical role in shaping a person's political voice. According to a number of authors, past experiences of marginalisation inhibits political voice (Freire, 1970, 1972; Prilleltensky and Gonick, 1996; Watts *et al.*, 2003). However, "past experiences of marginalisation" is a broad category, which requires some unpacking.

Some authors believe that lack of political voice can be the result an inadequate educational system which alienates students – thereby marginalising them – into memorizing knowledge instead of building it (Freire, 1972; Lloyd, 1972; Lucio-Villegas, 2009). Freire (1985a, 1992) described this system as banking education, which is an imposed system that sustains a culture of silence of the marginalised. According to Freire, the marginalised are not building their knowledge, and are thus fated to remain silent. The culture of silence does not permit the voice of any who have not been accepted into the prevailing hierarchical system (*e.g.* peasants' views are not welcome on agrarian reform). Lloyd further explains that the culture of silence is characterized by "hopelessness, passivity [and] self-doubt" (1972, p.7).

Freire, a pedagogue, conceived that an empowering educational process would "allow people to move away from a culture of silence and to have the experience and confidence to say their own word" (Lucio-Villegas, 2009, p.2). As Gamson explained, when teaching literacy is done properly, it:

> "gives voice to the voiceless and destroys the culture of silence that helps maintain their [marginalisation], allowing [marginalised] people both to understand their experience in sociocultural terms and to realize their capacity to transform that reality" (1991, p.44).

In other circumstances, the culture of silence could be the result of a political/religious system, which they are not even aware of (Freire, 1972; Watts *et al.*, 2003). Individuals may be unaware of state inequalities, or have "collective identities of inferiority" (Prilleltensky and Gonick, 1996, p.136). Other commentators have attempted to explain this with reference to the "belief in a just world" (Janoff-Bulman *et al.*, 1985; Lerner and Miller, 1978; Lerner and Montada, 1998; Lerner and Simmons, 1966).[50] The belief in a just world states that "people need to believe that the world is a just place in which individuals get what they deserve" (Hafer and Bègue, 2005, p.128). In the context of marginalisation belief in a just world is seen as a explanation for inaction where, for instance, marginalised people justify their situation by attributing it to natural causes – *e.g.* the lack of rain for agriculture, instead of lacking governmental rural support – or their own failings (Harper *et al.*, 1990; Prilleltensky and Gonick, 1996; Watts *et al.*, 1999).

Freire (1970) affirmed that in order to understand the culture of silence it is important to study the historical-cultural configuration in which relationships of dependency are formed. In Freire's words, "it is not the dominator who constructs a culture and imposes it on the dominated. This culture is the result of the structural relations between the dominated and the dominators" (1970, p.44).

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[50] *Just World* theory is a large body of work based on the ground breaking study by Lerner and Simmons (Lerner and Simmons, 1966). It later inspired a number of studies (Lerner, 1980; Lerner and Miller, 1978; Lerner and Montada, 1998) and it has been applied in different fields such as domestic violence (Janoff-Bulman *et al.*, 1985) and poverty (Harper *et al.*, 1990).

To understand the development of political voice a number of factors may be taken into consideration. These factors of an marginalised individual's background might include community environment (urban or rural), culture, caste, religion, gender, age, socialization and power relations (Cleaver, 2001; Devas and Grant, 2003; Goetz and Gaventa, 2001; Guijt and Shah, 1998), and institutions – *e.g.* government, civil society, or the private sector (Green, 2008; Watts *et al.*, 2003). Often, these factors have a negative effect on the marginalised, potentially inhibiting their political voices. In India, for instance, although officially banned, castes are still used to exclude certain groups from the political debate (Dirks, 2001; Kumar, 2013).

Yet, even if marginalised, there are factors within an individual background that might work as potential incentives to engage in political voice (Watts *et al.*, 2003). These include, for instance, previous participation in youth and political groups (and social movements), as well as the activities and experiences acquired through engagement in collective action (Serrano-García, 1994; Slater and Tacchi, 2004; Watts *et al.*, 2003). However, personal motivation and decision cannot be discarded, and analysis should take into consideration individual context (*e.g.* family background; community activities).

Moreover, analysis of an individual's background might provide clues on how communication processes take place, including the use of ICTs. By looking at the relationships, ties, and networks which affect an individual (van Dijk, 2005), it might be possible, for instance, to identify the reasons of: why some do not foresee or feel able to use ICTs (Madon *et al.*, 2009; Postma, 2001; Selwyn, 2004); different needs and uses of the internet (Burrell, 2009); or lack of meaningful use of ICTs for political voice (Bonfadelli, 2002; Orlikowski, 2000; Selwyn, 2004; Silverstone, 1996).

2.5.2 Social context

It is widely accepted in the literature that collective processes are fundamental in supporting the development of an individual's political voice (Craig and Mayo, 2004; Diani, 2000; Freire, 1970, 1983, 1992; Milan, 2013; Summers-Effler, 2002). Freire (1970,

1983, 1992), for instance recognizes that a marginalised individual is usually inspired by collective processes, or engaging in collective action and reflection (see reflective dialogue, under section 2.5.5, below). Individuals need each other to discover; and discovery is a social process (Gadotti, 1994).[51]

The importance of collective processes is frequently highlighted in the participation and empowerment literature. Through a collective effort, marginalised individuals can achieve meaningful and empowering change (Alinsky, 1946; Craig and Mayo, 2004; Freire, 1972). Serrano-García (1994) states that true empowerment that will foster resistance to social change, depends on collaboration and participation. Whereas Craig and Mayo (2004) claim that the marginalised, with their limited power, can only challenge the powerful through uniting forces into a critical mass – an empowered collective.

Social movements are known to create a social context with a variety of opportunities to engage in collective processes (Castells, 1997; Diani, 2003; Haug, 2013; Mische, 2003). In the absence of social movements these opportunities and the context would not be so readily available to an individual.

The basis of collective processes consist of communication processes, including opportunities and frequency of interactions, sharing and respecting views, feelings and emotions (Lawler and Thye, 1999; Lucio-Villegas, 2009), which influence the development of an individual's political voice. Through interactions in a social movement, members might share knowledge, develop capabilities and self-determination (Gamson, 1991). The greater the frequency of interactions, the greater potential of individuals to develop interdependence between each other, leading to long-term group cohesion and stability (Lawler and Thye, 1999). Sharing grievances can foster a sense of collective identity (Garrett, 2006), as well as being a source of emotional energy and solidarity (Summers-Effler, 2002). Participants of social movements describe experiencing trust, a sense of belonging, and commitment

[51] Although discovery might be done in reflection, Freire (1985b) argues that discovery cannot be purely intellectual, and it must involve collective action, action is dependent of the reflection and vice-versa.

through sharing views and learning about other people's conditions (Polletta, 2002). This may inspire people to take risks to create change (McAdam, 1986; Polletta, 2002).[52]

Social movements are shaped by the power relations within and surrounding them (Gaventa, 2002; Polletta, 2002). As a result, some communication processes may be embedded in conflict and competition (Diani, 1992, 2003; Hafer and Bègue, 2005; Ronfeldt *et al.*, 1998). Even among individuals who share similar interests, or with shared identities, there may be different conceptions of what should be done, what action should be taken, as well as problems of accountability[53] and leadership (Polletta, 2002). Moreover, participants of social movements may have different status and/or resources, which may range from poor marginalised individuals to highly professionalized non-governmental / non-profit organisations (NGOs). This is a competitive environment with a diverse set of actors with varying levels of power and skills, which may pose a challenge for marginalised individuals to navigate (Cornwall, 2004; Gaventa, 2006; Mitlin and Bebbington, 2006).

Such a competitive social environment of social movements is often mirrored by disparate access to ICTs (Brodock, 2010; Morozov, 2011; Schlozman *et al.*, 2012) and attitudes toward technology (Kavada, 2010) by its members. Beyond the limited availability and use of ICTs, evidence suggests that face-to-face interaction within social movements is favoured and accompanied by higher levels of trust and reciprocity among participants (Hale *et al.*, 1999; Molony, 2006).[54]

As suggested previously in this Chapter, communication processes within social movements need to be contextualized and analysed beyond their mere channels of transmission – *i.e.* whether mediated through technology or face-to-face – in which

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[52] See further discussion on sense of agency, section 6.4, below.

[53] See Fisher (1993) for a more complete definition and study on accountability.

[54] However, there is a growing potential for mobile phones, as a communication tool for personal networks. For instance, a recipient of a message from a known source is more likely to react, by forwarding the message, joining a demonstration, *etc.* (Hermanns, 2008).

the communication takes place. According to Coyne and Parker, "[t]he medium is incidental. What counts are the meanings that are conveyed"(2006, p.171). Meaning and information, for instance, "can only be understood in the context of the social relationships in which information and communication are processed" (Castells, 2009, p. 140 – citing the work of Chiller, 2007). Analysis, thus, should include bonds, relationships, interactions, and transactions (van Dijk, 2005) between participants and external supporters of social movements.

Moreover, the social context of social movements can influence the process of developing a political voice through a number of ways. For instance, the ability to self-organise (*i.e.* the act and process of getting together and organise towards a common goal) has the potential to improve understanding of individuals' mutual realities. It enables people to construct their own knowledge (Alinsky, 1946; Gaventa and Cornwall, 2008), and increase the ability of individuals to dictate their own agenda without the interference of outsiders who do not experience the same reality (Phillips, 2003). Phillips explain this ideas as:

> "Self-organisation emerges as a central theme – people shaking off external perceptions of what they are or ought to be and establishing their right to define themselves – and the major claim throughout is that neither the injustices they experience nor their most likely solutions can be adequately grasped without the group's full involvement. This is partly a practical claim: that those who have not experienced an oppression will misread the problems and come up with inadequate solutions. It is also a statement about what it means to participate as equals. Oppressed or subordinated groups have to be able to find their own voice, to speak for themselves, to be recognized as active participants" (2003, p.265).

Lucio-Villegas (2009) introduces the concept of localized context. The localized context suggests that individuals' actions should be inspired by context and experiences that are meaningful to them. The word meaningful is particular important as it directly relates to what individuals understand and give meaning to. In the participation literature, Gaventa argues that "it is in the arenas of everyday life in which people are able to resist power and to construct their own voice" (2006, p.28). But voice must not be constrained at the local level. For marginalised individuals to develop a political voice, they need to feel empowered to operate outside of their traditional spheres of

activity, to challenge systems and foresee opportunities that they were previously unaware of (Slater and Tacchi, 2004).

2.5.3 Resources

The complex and diverse social context of social movements influences the development and acquisition of resources to enable the development of political voice (Watts, unpublished). Resources, in this context, include skills, capabilities, and experiences acquired by marginalised members of a grassroots organisation.[55]

Associations with other groups and individuals, especially support from elite allies can create the conditions that favour social movements' activities (McAdam, 1986) and development of resources. Research shows that engagement in collective action – even with the support of elite allies with different levels of expertise – can be individually self-enhancing for marginalised members (Tropp and Brown, 2004).

The process of developing participation trains marginalised individuals in presenting arguments, enables learning of skills in negotiating agendas, and teaches how to engage with political authorities (Polletta, 2002). More than political capabilities, the development of individual capacities such as independence and competence (Schlozman *et al.*, 2012), trust (Passy and Giugni, 2001) and solidarity[56] among participants can increase engagement in a social movement.

While resources are developed and acquired through communication processes in the social context of a social movement, it can also be used to improve certain communication processes. For instance, certain mobilization skills – *e.g.* motivational speech and sharing of feelings (Carr, 2003; Gutierrez, 1994) – can be used in face-to-

[55] There is a vast literature on both skills and capabilities. However, in this framework, skills represent "the ability, coming from one's knowledge, practice, aptitude, *etc.*, to do something well" (Dictionary.com Unabridged). And capability stands for the ability to perform actions, which includes not only measurable ones (*e.g.* ability to write) but also other capabilities that more difficult to measure (*e.g.* ability to be self-confident).

[56] See sense of agency, section 2.5.4, below.

face interactions to increase bonds and cooperation among participants of a social movement. Development of activist capabilities might inspire the meaningful use of ICT tools for political autonomy and organisation (Castells *et al.*, 2006).

2.5.4 Sense of agency

The sense of agency is an essential variable in the process of developing a political voice. It represents the extent to which an individual feels capable and empowered to engage in social or political action (Watts and Guessous, 2006; Watts *et al.*, 2003). Reflection[57], without a sense of agency, "may produce nothing more than an 'armchair activist', someone who is analytic and articulate, but lacking the capacity for active engagement in civic or political affairs" (Watts and Guessous, 2006, p.3). Agency is the individual's ability to exert influence on matters of concern to them (Gigler, 2004; Watts, unpublished).

Active participation in social movements, through collective processes, fosters a sense of agency. The empowerment literature sees collective processes, and opportunities for interactions in particular, as a source of emotions that influence the development of political voice (Gutierrez, 1995; Zimmerman, 1995). Emotions and feelings developed through collective experiences, become guides and engines for reflection, which lead to action (Castells, 2009). Moreover, The role of emotions, together with identity, culture, social networks, might mobilize individuals and ultimately lower resource costs to engage in action (Bennett and Segerberg, 2012).

Individuals might develop a sense of agency through feelings such as self-confidence (Tacchi and Kiran, 2008) or solidarity (Lawler and Thye, 1999; Summers-Effler, 2002). According to Summers-Effler, the experience of solidarity "transforms the group into a sacred object or a source of emotional energy, and therefore it builds community within the group" (2002, p.55). This can inspire people to put their body on the front line – taking risks together – but also sharing the successes of their actions (McAdam,

[57] See section 2.5.5, in this Chapter.

1986; Polletta, 2002). Solidarity, as a source of emotional energy, "seems to provide a springboard for new forms and expressions of active citizenship, entailing both rights and responsibilities" (Walker, 2009, p.1045).

Anger (Castells, 2009) and "moral shock" produced by particular events or facts (*e.g.* images of torture) (Jasper and Poulsen, 1995) can become catalysts for a sense of agency. The chances of engagement are increased if prospective participants, those who are not yet engaged, judge the behaviour of authorities as having little or low legitimacy (McAdam and Paulsen, 1993; Passy and Giugni, 2001).

Sense of agency can also be inspired by 'spirituality' and collective worship – or a belief in a higher purpose – within social movements. A study of African American social movements revealed that: "the inspiration, strategy, and courage for this struggle relied heavily on religious and spiritual belief" (Brookings, 1999 cited on Watts *et al*, 1999, p. 259). Collective rituals, which include singing and dancing, may contribute to euphoric moods and a sense of belonging to a group (Jasper, 1997).

Some studies on the determinants of participation in social movements suggest further aspects that influence the sense of agency. Prospective participants have their own individual perceptions on judging, or choosing, to participate in social movements. Some studies have shown that even when there is similar context and background, that "individual perceptions are strong predictors of engagement" in social movements (Passy and Giugni, 2001, p.125).

Perceptions by prospective participants might be influenced by the perceived effectiveness of actions, including individual contributions, as well as the effectiveness of the organisation in question (McAdam, 1986; Polletta and Jasper, 2001). Real or perceived risks associated with participation may make involvement more difficult (Passy and Giugni, 2001). Personal availability, or time to devote to activities, also affects the choice to participate or not (Diani, 2003; Passy and Giugni, 2001). For marginalised individuals, time is not the only concern. Often other assets are lacking, such as funds, social networks, and the emotional energy required to engage in

organisation and mobilization in political action (McAdam, 1986; Mitlin and Bebbington, 2006).

Furthermore, some of the aspects described above may increase an individual's motivation to engage with technologies and/or new technological tools (DiMaggio and Hargittai, 2001). Yet, there is limited data on how this takes place in marginalised individuals (Tacchi, 2005a).

2.5.5 Reflection

The different bodies of literature reviewed describe reflection as a crucial, yet complex factor in the process of developing a political voice (Carr, 2003; Freire, 1970, 1979; Watts *et al.*, 2003). This is because, reflection "usually resides in the mind of an individual and it is difficult to be directly observed" (Rarieya, 2005, p.315).

Reflection can be described in different stages, although it is not understood as a linear process, but a continuous iterative process, affecting, and being affected by, action (Freire, 1970, 1983, 1985a).

Reflection, which contributes to the process of developing a political voice, cannot be a simple "turning back"[58] on experience, but is an "assessment of what is being reflected upon" (Mezirow, 1998, p.185). The author further describes that developing critical reflection[59] involves realizing:

> "one's own assumptions pertaining to the economic, ecological, educational, political, religious, bureaucratic, or other taken-for granted cultural systems. We critically reflect on the canons, paradigms, or ideologies that have generated traditional roles and relationships, and on how they have shaped and limited the development of our point of view and have fostered dependency relationships" (Mezirow, 1998, p.193)

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[58] According to Mezirow 'turning back' on experience can mean, for instance "simple awareness of an object, event or state, including awareness of a perception, thought, feeling, disposition, intention, action, or of one's habits of doing these things" (1998, p.185).

[59] Some authors differentiate reflection from "critical reflection", but Freire and authors on empowerment and participation generally refer to critical reflection as reflection.

Critical reflection is deeply rooted in experience (Taylor, 2008), which enables awareness, insights, and forming attitudes about socio-political and cultural matters (Watts and Guessous, 2006). Reflection also incorporates emotions, feelings, and reasoning (Chiu, 2006), and becomes the engine of meaningful action (Castells, 2009). As a cycle, action leads to further critical reflection.

Critical reflection, although done by individuals, is helped by collective processes (Carr, 2003; Castells, 2009; Freire, 1970, 1983, 1985b, 1992; Shor and Freire, 1987). Fora "…for sharing meaning and working through conflicting meanings among individuals" enable the development of critical reflection (Fenwick, 2008, p.232). Rarieya (2005) calls this a reflective dialogue. Reflective dialogue is:

> "not an individual activity but it is reflection with others who ask questions of one another, thereby helping each other gain new insights about situations, beliefs and values. Moreover, the perspectives are usually shared in an atmosphere of mutual support. Hence, collaboration is also a significant aspect of reflective dialogue" (Rarieya, 2005, p.315).

Because reflective dialogue is done through communicating (Rarieya, 2005) – either verbally or shared writing – it can benefit from communication tools, such as ICTs. A study of school teachers in Norway, for instance, showed that the use of internet tools for reflective dialogue, supported the development of individual capabilities and overcome some teachers "refusal" to use new technologies (Beck and Jamissen, 2011). Yet, similar to sense of agency, there is a dearth of research on reflection and ICTs in the context of the marginalised.

2.5.6 Action: expressing political voice

Political voice, at the most basic level, is expressed through participation and engagement in political (or civic) discourse through the articulation of views, needs, discontent and grievances (Macedo *et al.*, 2005; Schlozman *et al.*, 2012). Political voice can manifest itself through actions such as boycotts, complaints, organised protests, lobbying, and or participation in decision-making processes (Goetz and Gaventa, 2001). Political voice can also be articulated through symbolic actions (*e.g.* vigils, wearing a

particular colour representing a cause, etc.) and it is not limited to verbal or written words (*e.g.* speech, email, publications, *etc*.).

Yet, engaging in political action is not a straightforward thing for some individuals. Just because individuals share a common problem or goal, doesn't mean they will engage in action. The issue of free riding, has been a problem for many social movements across the globe (Bennett and Segerberg, 2012; Castells, 2009; Hale *et al.*, 1999).[60] However, technology might be helping to reduce communication costs and making it easier for free riders to become participants in political engagement (Bennett and Segerberg, 2012).

For the marginalised, factors such as limited education, inadequate social capital and other class-based factors may prevent the expression of their political voice (Appadurai, 2004, 2006; Mitlin, 2004). Moreover, there is also the danger of 'leaders' who act as patrons or gatekeepers, preventing the development of political voice by marginalised individuals (de Wit and Berner, 2009). As a consequence, social movements can often "become captured by, or at the very least give most voice to, some interests more than others simply because the poor and poorest do not participate equally in the collective process" (Mitlin and Bebbington, 2006, p.6).

Political voice is not limited to the organisational (or group) political voice, or can be simply described as a 'product' that individuals express, for instance, towards government.[61] Political voice is also expressed through actions, including interactions, which occur within organisations (Appadurai, 2004). Democratic participation in decision-making and knowledge production can enable the marginalised to develop and exercise political voice (Fung and Wright, 2001; Gaventa and Cornwall, 2008;

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[60] Referencing Olson's (1965) study, Bennet and Segerberg describe that: "in large groups in which individual contributions are less noticeable, rational individuals will free-ride on the efforts of others: it is more cost-efficient not to contribute if you can enjoy the good without contributing. Moreover, if not enough people join in creating the good your efforts are wasted anyway. Either way, it is individually rational not to contribute, even if all agree that all would be better off if everyone did" (2012, p.749).

[61] Organisational political voice is taken to represent the views of the majority of its members and/or, as suggested by Haug, social movements' political actions "appear to the general public as more or less homogenous actors with a given goal and strategy" (Haug, 2013, p.706).

Naidoo, 2001). Participants' engagement brings not only legitimacy and democracy to social movements, but may also empower these individuals to develop capabilities and self-determination (Gamson, 1991; Tropp and Brown, 2004). Through continuous engagement, members will learn about all the issues and different perspectives that surround a specific debate – *e.g.* they can be part of a national and international solidarity community, where the interactions with other members may foster exchanges of knowledge and views.

Yet, although political voice is said to be a voluntary activity, the factors described in this Chapter have to be taken into consideration whether they may influence marginalised individuals' choice to speak, or not.[62]

2.5.7 A model of the framework

In order to illustrate the analytical framework I have created two figures. These figures are meant illustrate the conceptual framework for the better understanding of the reader. It is not possible to fully depict the social phenomenon under investigation with these figures, and they are abstractions and simplification. The figures are not meant to be and cannot be comprehensive. The first figure represents the categories and the relationships between them, a representation of a process (a cycle), at the individual level. The second figure shows the development of the process operating on the collective level, showing the process as an iterative cycle, the process changes and develops for individuals, leading to an organisational political voice. In short, this framework examines how these two levels – individual and collective – impact one another, starting from the individual perspective.

The first figure includes all the factors of the framework as described in this dissertation (*i.e.* social context, resources, sense of agency, reflection, and action). The factors are represented in different ways. Personal Experiences and Background (PEB), for instance, is represented as a starting point, because it is a static element, and is not

[62] See section 2.1.

affected by the process. An individual “enters” the process, carrying the baggage of his/her past experiences and background, influencing all other elements. However, while the elements interact and influence one another, PEB remains completely unchanged (as it is something in the past). This does not mean that individuals cannot reflect back and realize different things about their past experiences and background, or reinterpret past events.

Reflection, resources and sense of agency are placed inside a dotted rectangle, which means they are not separated from the process; and the arrows placed among the boxes indicate that these elements influence one another. Although these elements are portrayed here at the individual level, they are all influenced by the collective level – this is represented by the big rounded square, denoting the social context. The social context in itself, represents collective processes, more specifically, the ones that happened as a result of joining and engaging with a grassroots organisation. This framework focuses on individuals within the collective, and how they are affected by it. Engagement with the social context may contribute to the development of individual skills, capabilities, and experiences (represented by the Resources box in figure 1). As individuals reflect they are influenced by others reflecting together within their social context – entering into reflective dialogue. Sense of agency is the personal motivation, which is also influenced by collective processes which occur in all other elements.

In this framework ‘action’ is the act of expressing a political voice and is shown as an outcome of the process. The expression of political voice feeds back into the process (indicated by the double ended arrow). Action, can consequently, lead to further engagement with the social context, support reflection, development of resources and sense of agency. This is a continuous cycle, an iterative process.

Face-to-face interactions and ICTs are not directly represented in the figures, because they are analysed as part of each element of this framework. With a focus on reflection, for instance, data can be collected on what individuals think and expect from ICTs. Social context, action, and resources, provide data on context and use of

these different channels of interaction. The sense of agency provides the rationale – and instigate some emotions – behind the decision to engage with ICTs.

Figure 1: A model of the analytical framework – Individual level

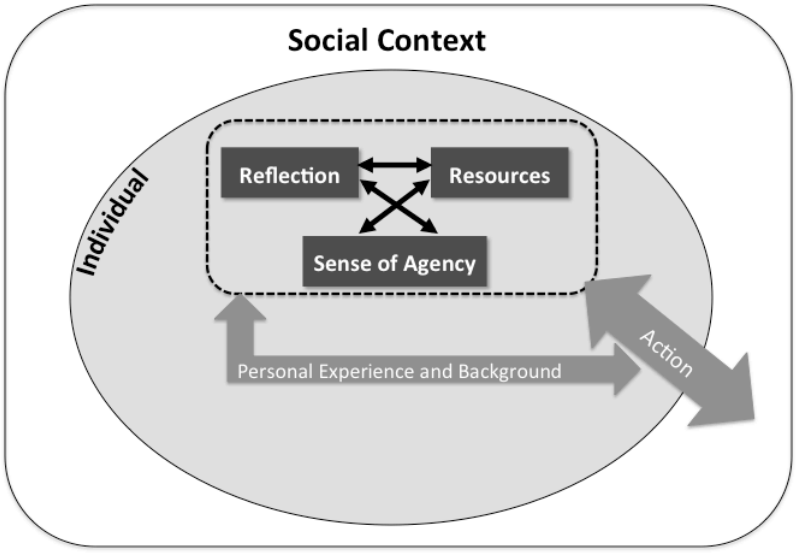
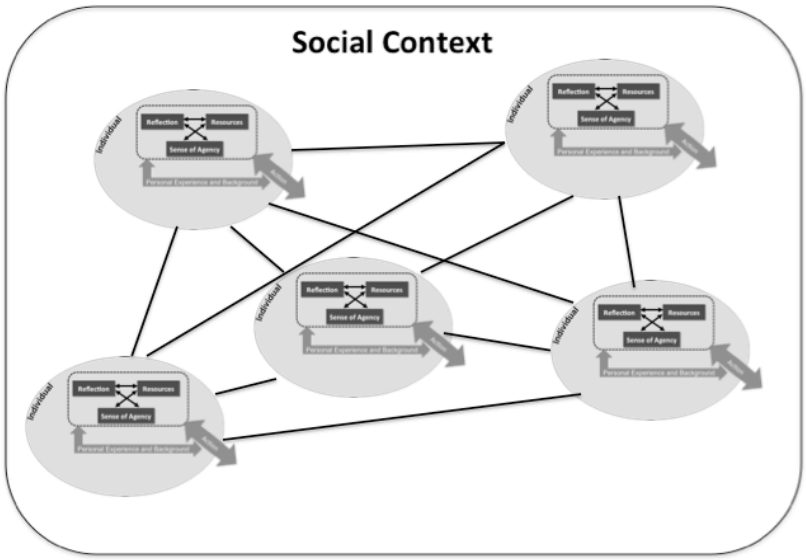


Figure 2: A model of analytical framework – Collective level



An important aspect of this research is represented in figure 2: the individual process of developing political voice in the collective context. Figure 2 illustrates the collective level. It highlights that, as part of a grassroots organisation, individuals influence and are influenced by the collective level. The figure represents the aggregation of individual voices (collective actions), which compose the organisational political voice.

2.6 Conclusions

This Chapter has covered relevant literature on marginalised individuals' political voice and lack thereof. Moreover, it looked at the development of political voice within social movements and the potential role of ICTs in this context.

The literature reviewed above suggests that information on the use of ICTs by marginalised individuals within social movements is limited. Research on social movements in the global south, could make a significant contribution to the understanding on how marginalised individuals develop political voice and what is the role of ICTs in this process. More specifically, grassroots movements, in which the marginalised are able to self-organise and dictate their own agenda, could have an impact on marginalised participants' appropriation of ICTs for political voice.

Qualitative studies on ICTs are necessary to complement quantitative studies, which are often reductive and over-simplified (Rodriguez, 2004). These qualitative studies should provide data on individual's use of how these technologies are facilitating political voice (or not) in poorer environments (Tacchi, 2005b). Moreover, qualitative research can provide data on the dynamics of the realities of marginalised individuals, their practices, and relationships (James, 2005; Mehra *et al.*, 2004; Norris, 2001; Unwin, 2009a; van Dijk, 2005; Warschauer, 2003c).

The analytical framework proposed in this Chapter, was devised to focus on individuals, but taking into consideration the role of collective processes. In Chapter 3, section 3.3 I provide a detailed description of how this framework was adapted to the research strategy during fieldwork.

3. Methodology

Introduction

The choice of methodology described in this Chapter, reflects its appropriateness in studying shack dwellers, and the complex context in which they develop political voice and use ICTs. As described in the literature review Chapter, qualitative research should include data on shack dwellers realities, existing practices and relationships.

Among the choices of qualitative methods, participant observation was identified as particularly appropriate for the context and nature of this study. As suggested by Jorgensen:

> "participant observation is exceptional for studying processes, relationships among people and events, the organization of people and events, continuities over time, and patterns, as well as the immediate sociocultural contexts in which human existence unfolds" (1989, p.17).

A case study approach was used to investigate the process of developing a political voice, and the role of ICTs in the process. The case study focuses on Abahlali baseMjondolo (AbM), a shack dwellers organisation. AbM offers a good case to study the development of a political voice for a number of reasons. Among these are that AbM is a grassroots (marginalised) movement, where the expression of a political voice, institutionally and individually is a prominent feature. AbM has a political stand on expressing their own voices, which places an emphasis on the development of a political voice in members. Moreover, AbM has been using both mobile phones and internet for mobilizations and expressing political voice.

This Chapter includes the research design adopted and procedures followed on fieldwork. The Chapter is organised into three main sections. Section 3.1 discusses the research design, the research questions and includes a discussion of the choice of methodology. Section 3.2 describes the methods applied to collect data and a brief description of the approach followed to analyse the material. Section 3.3 describes how factors that influence the development of a political voice were coded and

categorized for the collection and analysis of the data. The final section briefly discusses limitations and modifications made to the initial plan in response to field work realities.

3.1 Research Design

Commonly, research design represents "the logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study's initial research questions and, ultimately, to its conclusion" (Yin, 2003, p.20). The research design described in this section covers the research approach and methods chosen to collect data on shack dwellers, and the complex environment in which they live, engage, and express their political voice. I have chosen to conduct exploratory research as a way to construct theory from the data collected (Davies, 2006). Exploratory research is a useful approach to the way I collected data, not only at the beginning but also throughout the research. Due to the nature of the research topic, through exploratory research I was able to include description of facts, cultural and structural arrangements, social processes and beliefs systems normally found in the communities studied (Jorgensen, 2003).

This section includes a description of the research methods, research questions, and a brief justification of the data collection method chosen. Further aspects of the research design are described in later sections of this Chapter.

3.1.1 Research Methods

A single case study approach was used, and qualitative data was collected.

The case study approach is commonly used to examine human experiences, where statistical methods and formal models are unsuitable (George and Bennett, 2004). The contextual conditions of the phenomenon studied, and the cognitive content that influences this process are important factors. The case involves a number of complex 'variables', which makes the case study approach the most appropriate strategy to study this phenomenon (Yin, 2003).

The case study approach is often criticized on the grounds that its findings are not generalizable to a wider population (Gomm *et al.*, 2009). However, case studies are not necessarily used to generalise. As Yin explains:

> "Case study, like the experiment, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. In this sense, the case study, like the experiment, does not represent a 'sample', and in doing a case study, your goal will be to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization)" (Yin, 2003, p.10)

This means that the use of case study for this research, serves two purposes: describing the phenomenon and discovering links to the analytical framework suggested in the previous Chapter.

The choice of Abahlali baseMjondolo (AbM)[63], as a case study was chosen based on it being a grassroots (marginalised) movement, with a strong political voice; their political stand on expressing their own voices, emphasising the expression of political voice; and previous work on the use of both mobile phones and internet for mobilization and political voice. AbM describes itself as a shack dwellers' social movement. However, AbM has defined organisational boundaries, which includes a membership, and for this reason could be defined as a social movement organisation (SMO).[64] This means that studying AbM has some advantages when compared to less well-defined social movements. Social movements are hard to study because there are no clear defined boundaries (Diani, 2003; McAdam, 1986). Often, social movements are defined by broad goals and interests, which might not necessarily include an affiliation or membership. This could represent a challenge to understand how social movements operate and mobilize the marginalised.

[63] An introduction and overview on AbM is presented in Chapter 5.

[64] See details on Chapter 5.

An SMO, however, is an organised component of a social movement (Zald and McCarthy, 1980).[65] SMOs are defined by a particular organisational structures, which, together with other SMOs coexist and act as carriers of a single – or multiple – social movement(s) (Gamson, 2009; Jenkins, 1983; Zald and McCarthy, 1980). In other words, an SMO "is a complex, or formal, organisation that identifies its goals with the preferences of a social movement or a counter movement and attempts to implement those goals" (McCarthy and Zald, 2009, p.20).

However, besides being an SMO, AbM was funded by, and is mainly composed of, shack dwellers, which means that AbM can be described as a grassroots (social movement) organisation (or, to put it simply, a grassroots organisation). Being defined as a grassroots organisation provides an interesting contextual condition (Yin, 2003) to study the process in which marginalised individuals developed a political voice, as described in Chapter 2. In the case of AbM, forming a grassroots organisation meant dealing with, and often confronting, some of the issues which lead to the lack of political voice. As described in Chapter 5 of this dissertation, shack dwellers in South Africa have been affected by the prevalence of patronage relations and lack of social cohesion inside informal settlements. AbM members, being shack dwellers, have also been affected by the same factors within their own informal settlements.

Moreover, reflecting some of the general data on shack dwellers, AbM members have long adopted and used mobile phones. There was evidence, for instance, of AbM members using mobile phones to mobilize and contact the media. Although internet penetration is still low in South Africa, AbM has maintained an active website showcasing its activities, and runs e-mail mailing lists to inform supporters nationally and internationally of its activities.

The case study of AbM is accessed through the individual narratives collected from in-depth semi structured interviews; participant observation (*e.g.* of meetings, marches,

[65] Examples of grassroots movements include the Zapatista in Mexico – briefly reviewed in Chapter 2; the landless movement; The anti-globalization movement (Obadare, 2006); Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) in South Africa (Ballard *et al.*, 2006b; Chiumbu, 2012; Loudon, 2010).

events and exchanges with external supporters and government officials); published materials (*e.g.* media, academic articles and reports); AbM's website, mailing list, and personal communication. I will describe each of these methods below.

3.1.2 Research questions

Two research questions are posed to structure this dissertation. The research questions were formulated based on gaps identified in literature reviewed in Chapter 2. The first question relates to the lack or inequality of political voices by the marginalised. Different bodies of literature talked about the different concepts and factors which explain the development of political voice by the marginalised. Based on that, in the context of this study, the first research question asks about the process in general – how is political voice developed by individual shack dwellers? The second research question relates to the lack of evidence of meaningful use of ICTs by the marginalised for political voice. Hence, the second question is about the role of ICTs in this process. Meaning, how (or whether) shack dwellers use – and benefit from the use – of ICTs for the development of political voice. These two questions are necessarily interlinked. Both questions are empirical and contextual, yet I use the analytical framework described in the previous Chapter, to devise a set of more general theoretical questions. Below, I will examine each of these questions in more detail.

1. How do shack dwellers develop a political voice?

This question asks about the process of developing a political voice. This question asks about the pertinent factors of the process that leads to the development of political voice. What is the process of developing a political voice? Are the factors described in the analytical framework (*e.g.* social context and sense of agency) influencing the process of developing a political voice? What factors enable/constrain the development of an individual's political voice? What kinds of political voice do individual members have? What are the main differences and or similarities amongst individuals?

The second question looks at how this process might be facilitated by the use of ICTs. Thus, the second research question is as follows.

2. ***What is the role of ICTs in this process of shack dwellers developing a political voice?***

This question is about the role of ICTs in the process of developing a political voice, thus other questions emerge: What role do ICTs play in individual and collective processes of developing and expressing a political voice? Does participation in a grassroots movement influence an individual's use of ICT? And if so, how? What are the barriers to use?

3.1.3 Data collection

A number of methods were used on fieldwork to collect and record data. The main sources of empirical data were semi-structured in-depth interviews, which focused on both individuals' perceptions and their actions since joining AbM.

The interviews were structured along a number of questions based on the analytical framework described in the literature review Chapter (see Chapter 2, section 2.5). The first part of the interview questions focus on the context and engagement with AbM activities and the community. This includes information on availability, access and use of ICTs before and after joining AbM. The most important part of the interview questions, structured open-ended questions, focus on gathering data on interviewees' views and experience. The questions were formulated based on factors identified in the literature as important to the development of political voice. For instance, individual reflection about what (or whether) has changed in their lives since they joined AbM, is important factor to identify in the process of developing a political voice. These include questions such as: "What kind of activities have you been involved in AbM? (E.g. meetings, marches, road barricades, campaigns: No land, no house, no vote); How important do you think these activities are (do they matter)? How they benefit you and/or other people?"

The questions were devised through an iterative process, re-writing the questions as relevant information became available as a result of interactions with AbM, and informal and formal interviews. For example, when I learned from the first interviewee about the "cellphone toyi-toyi" experience in 2007. I included a set of questions about this episode, in the interview guide template. The same applies to particular uses of technology or interpersonal relations, which I learned about from informal talks and during AbM meetings. Questions were tailored to individuals as a result of observations. Members, who were proactive during AbM meetings and organised activities, were asked questions related to their activities (for example: "Were you responsible for any activity (as a leader or member)? Who did you relate to in those activities (local community members/other community members/ AbM office/ external supporters)?").

The list of questions (see appendix 1) was adjusted for some respondents, when some questions were not applicable. For example, respondents who had little or no experience with computers were not asked the set of questions relating to the use of computers. However, I would still ask questions related to perceptions about other members' use, and their views of the role of particular tools (*e.g.* the AbM website). Moreover, using individual histories about their past and present insights and experiences (Watts *et al.*, 2003), helped to identify factors affecting the development of a political voice process.

In terms of data gathering it is important to note that interviews alone may provide biased data. For instance, there is a possibility that interviewees overlook relevant details, which they might not be aware of or consider irrelevant (Haug, 2013). When studying the process of developing a political voice, self-reports can be distorted and/or partial. This issue was also identified by Watts *et al*:

> "Although [the interview] respects the perspective of the respondent, it is subject to distortion due to gaps in recall, reticence about self-disclosure, a desire to project a certain image to the interviewer or the respondent herself or himself, and so on" (2003, p.190).

For this reason, I attempted to supplement the interview data with observations outside the interview context; through participant observation. Participant observation is one of several methods of qualitative research, also referred to as an ethnographic approach (Spradley, 1980). Participant observation can be described as a "a method in which a researcher takes part in the daily activities, rituals, interactions, and events of a group of people as one of the means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture" (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2002, p.1)

Participant observation can also be labour intensive, and has a propensity for culture shock. Moreover, the establishment of closer links between researcher and subjects, might compromise analysis of data collected (Bernard, 1994). The researcher needs to manage his/her impressions, and maintain a sense of objectivity through distance in order to write analytically about the subject (Kawulich, 2005).

Participant observation enabled me to collect data on group dynamics and communication exchanges. The method of participant observation offers a set of directions to assist the engagement with and collection of secondary data, as well as avoiding, or at least reducing the problem of passivity as pointed out by Gaventa and Cornwall (2008).[66]

Using the participant observation method, I engaged in AbM activities such as meetings, community visits and celebratory events. This allowed me to observe the activities, individuals, interpersonal relationship, and context (Spradley, 1980). As suggested by Haug, observing "what activists actually do when they strategize, quarrel, negotiate, create master frames, devise campaigns, or make decisions collectively is an important source of knowledge in making sense of social movements" (Haug, 2013', p. 723).

[66] According to the authors, the use of surveys and questionnaires "may reinforce passivity of powerless groups through making them the objects of another's inquiry, rather than subjects of their own" (Gaventa and Cornwall, 2008', p. 178).

While studying AbM, my role was not of a merely observer of the events, but I was actively participating in the discussions, meetings, events, and offering support such as transportation, and computer and internet skills. However, I also had to deal with certain problems that emerged from this participant observation approach (see sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.3 of this Chapter and 8.2 of Chapter 8).

While engaging in participant observation I identified features and tools of mobile phones and internet – that were used. A number of observations were made about the structure of communication, resource availability, including personal resources for buying airtime, individual familiarity (user skill) and motivations to use with the technologies (meaningful use). In that way participant observation also offered a way to corroborate and contextualise the information gained in interviews.

3.2 Research strategy

This section describes the methods used to collect data during fieldwork. It includes issues encountered, such as language, and information on sites, interviewees and ethical considerations.

3.2.1 Pre-fieldwork preparation

In January 2009, I made contact with AbM general secretary (at the time), by email. I requested her to bring my proposal – to come and meet AbM – to an AbM meeting to be discussed. After a few weeks she replied and said that some members of AbM would be happy to meet me. At the beginning of March 2009, I met with AbM general secretary, and later had a second meeting with AbM president (at the time), and five other members at the Kennedy Road informal settlement. On both occasions I discussed my research and the possibility of studying the organisation. After these encounters, and followed by months of email exchanges and phone calls, and with

AbM's agreement, I went to South Africa – mostly based in Durban – where I conducted nearly 6 months of fieldwork (January to June 2010).[67]

Choice of sites

During the research period, there were 15 branches of AbM within informal settlements in Kwazulu-Natal – concentrated in the eThekwini municipality and surrounding areas. See map for eThekwini municipality delimitations (Ethekwini Municipality, 2010) in appendix 2.

Interviews were conducted in the following locations: Motala Heights A and B, Foreman Road, Joe Slovo (next to the township of Lamontville), Syianda (KwaMashu) – Section A and B, and Pemary Ridge. Testimonials from former Kennedy Road residents were gathered at the University of Kwazulu-Natal and in safe houses in Durban. See appendix 3 for map of locations of informal settlements listed above.

In addition to the locations listed above I attended, and recorded, meetings, community visits, opening of new branches, celebrations, local AbM branch election in the following places: Emmause, Annet Drive and EmaWaveni (Tongaat), Tumbleweed Farm – Howick, Ridge View Transit Camp, and Zulu Land. See appendix 4 for map of locations of informal settlement in which I attended meetings, events, camps and celebrations.

Access and security

While conducting research in these informal settlements I had to deal with a number of difficulties in conducting my work. Informal settlements in Kwazulu-Natal are in many cases, unsafe and unhealthy places. As a researcher, I not only had to assess security issues for my own welfare but also be aware of the problems affecting the people I was working with.

[67] During my fieldwork I was hosted by the School of Development Studies of the University of Kwazulu-Natal (UKZN), where I had the opportunity to access all facilities and exchange my research insights with the faculty.

Being a participant observer, I heard stories or got, unintentionally, involved in everyday life crises of some interviewees or people surrounding them. Problems such as: domestic violence; harassment by local leaders and/or local council; healthy issues and local clinic crises; etc. While I could not ignore or neglect help in these instances, I often had to step back and re-evaluate my research goals, and my role as a participant observer.[68]

South African rape statistics are high; reportedly 95 cases for every 100,000 people (ISS Crime HUB, 2013) and the country is among the top ten countries for homicide rates (UNODC, 2013). These statistics on sexual violence and violent crime are disproportionately affecting informal settlements. However, I never felt personally threatened while inside these settlements – interviewees told me that the relative safety experienced in the areas visited during my research was due to the presence of AbM.

Most urban informal settlements in South Africa have no basic public services or infrastructure provided. Some of the settlements, where I conducted my fieldwork, had no toilets or electricity – or only illegal and hazardous electric connections.

3.2.2 The interviewees

Potential interviewees were identified through a variety of methods. First, I decided to approach people and ask to interview them, based on their engagement with AbM. This included their participation and their active engagement (or lack thereof) in meetings, community visits, events, and marches. Secondly, through initial interviews I have asked people to suggest other interviewees (a technique commonly referred to as "snowballing"[69]). The AbM website provided names of prominent members, for example those who signed press releases or were mentioned in other documents.

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[68] I further describe this issue on my conclusion Chapter, under limitations, section 8.2.

[69] Snowballing, or chain referrals, can be useful to learn more about social networks, for instance, how much one individual values another; but they can lead also to lock-ins into certain groups of like-minded

While visiting AbM branches, I also attempted to identify individual members who were not leading or seemed to be less engaged in AbM activities. My intention was to identify different members, a diversity of individuals and potential differences in political voices.

In total I identified 60 possible interviewees, and of those I was able to conduct full interviews with 30 AbM members, 2 AbM supporters, and 1 government official. I was not able to interview the other 27 potential subjects identified mainly due to difficulty in arranging a time and place for interview.

A break-down of the 30 AbM interviewees by gender, language, age, religion, education, employment, income, and residential status is provided below:

Table 2: ***Gender***

Women	Men
13	17

Table 3: ***Language***

isiZulu native speakers	isiXhosa native speakers	English native speakers
18 (60%)	7 (23%)	5 (17%)

people and thus bias the interview data. I used the snowballing technique to identify some interviewees, but also in combination with other techniques described in this section, thus the biasing effect would be small.

Table 4: *English language Skills*[70]

Unable to speak English	Felt able and confident to speak English
6 (20%)	24 (80%)

Table 5: *Age groups*

Equal or older than 40 years old	Between 26 and 40 years old	Between 18 and 25 years old
14 (47%)	11 (37%)	5 (16%)

Table 6: *Religion*

No Religion	Christian	Hindu	Muslim
3 (10%)	24 (80%)	2 (7%)	1 (3%)

Table 7: *Educational level*

Attended or were attending a University level degree	Graduated from school (finished 12th grade – "Matric");	Not finished school, attended between grade 8 and grade 12
3 (10%)	6 (20%)	21 (70%)

[70] A clarification should be made about English language skills data: data on interviewees does not reflect language skills among the majority of AbM members. The majority of AbM members are not fluent, or speak little English.

Table 8: ***Employment status***

Employed	Self-employed	Unemployed (either dependent on family, friends or government grants)
12 (40%)	5 (17%)	13 (43%)

Table 9: ***House status***

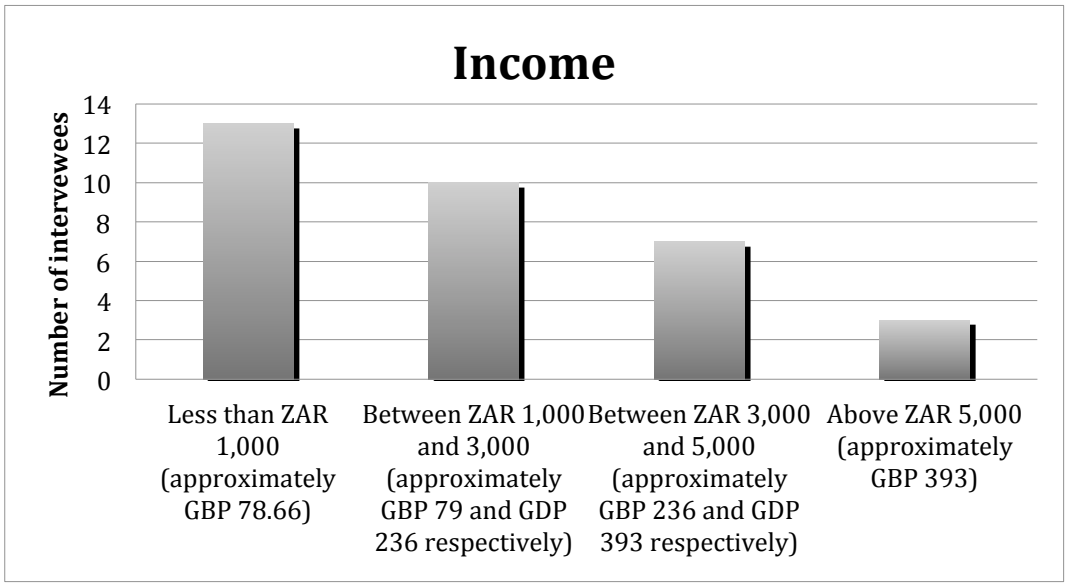
Owned a RDP house[71]	Rented a shack in a peri-urban settlement	Owned a shack[72]
3 (10%)	6 (20%)	21 (70%) (This number includes the interviewees who were evicted from Kennedy Road informal settlement after the attacks)[73]

[71] RDP stands for Reconstruction and Development Programme, for the South African government. Housing is one of the products of this program. See discussion in the contextual background, Chapter 4.

[72] To own a shack does not mean an individual has security of tenure. Many interviewees had built their shack within an informal settlement – usually with the permission of the 'local chief' – or had bought a shack from another resident, freeing them from rent payments but giving them no other entitlements.

[73] I describe these events, and provide further details in Chapters 5 and 6, sections 5.1.1 and 6.2.2.

Figure 3: *Income*[74]



- 4 interviewees were born and lived in a peri-urban settlement at the time of data collection; while the remaining 26 interviewees were all originally form rural areas in the states of Kwazulu-Natal and Eastern Cape. From this group, all stated to have moved to urban centres – and three to a peri-urban settlement – in pursuit of further education (high school) or work opportunities.

- Other information on mobile phone expenditure and percentage of personal airtime spent with AbM related activities is further described in the analysis and discussion, Chapter 6.

Apart from AbM members, I conducted interviews with two AbM supporters, both academics, who have been involved with AbM since its creation. One is a resident in Durban, and the other was from Durban but lives in Grahamstown. These interviews provided an outside view on the organisation, its context, and the interactions between AbM members and external (non-shack dwelling) supporters over a 5-year period. In addition I had informal discussions with 5 supporters, on the topic of

[74] For the unemployed or self-employed individuals, interviewees provided an approximate amount they receive per month coming from donations of family, friends, partners income, government grants, or anything that represent an amount of money which they can spent individually and – if applicable - for their dependents.

cooperation, mobilizations, general interaction and ICTs use with and amongst members of AbM. I was also able to observe some examples of groups and individual supporters (*e.g.* journalists, international social movements, students, church groups), who came to visit, for meetings, to learn through exchange, and support AbM for short periods of time (typically between 1 to 4 weeks).

Finally, I conducted one interview with a high-ranking government official – from the housing department. The interview focused on what kind interactions, cooperation, links, and means used to communicate with AbM and the department.[75]

These interviews, with academics, other supporters outside the organisation, and the government official, aimed at gaining insights into and information about the context, organisational features, and impact of the developing and developed political voice.

Lastly, I had a number of informal talks and discussions with other AbM members that, although not in formal interview settings, contributed valuable information about members' engagement, events, crises, and ICT use, as well as general background information and context. For instance, informal talks with Kennedy victims, provided me with important information about mobile phones role in channelling support and maintain bonds among these members.

3.2.3 Language

South Africa is a diverse country with 11 official languages. In the eThekwini municipality, where most of the fieldwork was conducted the first spoken languages are divided in: isiZulu (62.8%)[76], English (26.8%), isiXhosa (3.9%)[77], Afrikaans (1.7%) and

[75] The discussion included perceptions of successful and unsuccessful use of AbM's political voice to communicate with the housing department, in particular a specific interaction between AbM and the Housing department which elicited a formal response from the department. The interviewee gave a number of standard government protocol answers, including, what might be considered to be political propaganda and misinformation regarding previous agreements with AbM about official and publicly disclosed development projects.

[76] Originally spoken by people from Kwazulu-Natal state.

[77] Originally spoken by people from the Eastern Cape state.

others (4.8%) (Statictics South Africa, 2013). However, there are no official statistics that distinguish between first language and ability to speak (or understand) other languages. Inside informal settlements, where research was carried out, the majority spoke isiZulu and a minority spoke isiXhosa. One informal settlement, where the majority is of "Indian ethnic background", used English as their main language.

I do not speak isiZulu or isiXhosa – apart from some words useful to understand the context of conversations, such as making a differentiation between community issues (local) and AbM issues (organisational). However, many AbM members whom I engaged with spoke English, and the majority of the interviews were conducted in English. Although many members interviewed spoke English, their level of fluency varied, and this is reflected in the quotes used in this dissertation, which quote the respondents *verbatim*.

For the interviews conducted in isiZulu I used an isiZulu native speaker as interpreter, who was recommended by UKZN's isiZulu Department. Keeping in mind that the role of the interpreter could affect data collection, and that interpretation might introduce a degree of bias into the results (Squires, 2009), I spent considerable time training the interpreter and conducted all isiZulu interviews with his assistance, to avoid problems of consistency.

One example of problems with translated or interpreted interviews comes from the translation of the word "influence", which does not exist either in isiZulu and isiXhosa. People would often simply translate the word into "amandla", which means "power". However, in the context of my research (*e.g.* the question: who has the most influence in your community?), these were very different concepts. For this reason I had to explain the concept of "influence" to the interpreter to avoid it simply being translated into "power".

Two languages were used during AbM meetings: isiZulu and English – English because not all members could speak isiZulu. However, at most AbM events or visits to

informal settlements, the main language spoken was isiZulu, and on these occasions I was assigned an interpreter from among AbM members present.

3.2.4 Collecting and recording data

As described in section 3.1.3, data was collected through semi-structured interviews and participant observation. All interviews, but one, were video or audio recorded; 54 hours of interviews in total. I video and audio recorded many meetings and events of AbM, totalling over 30 hours of recording. These recordings contain data on AbM dynamics and interpersonal relationships that I was able to study while working with them. An important consideration I learned is that AbM was open for researchers to come and study them, but they also expected some sensitivity when recording events. For instance, when participating in some meetings, I would ask every member present if they approve of the recording, and I would ask them to kindly nod to me when it was time to stop the recording. Usually, this happened when the subject being discussed was sensitive (*e.g.* a personal matter).

Most meetings were audio-recorded, and a few events were video-recorded, such as the "human rights celebration in Zulu Land" and the "March to Zuma on the 22nd of March 2011". I kept a research diary – with descriptions and reflections – of informal talks and discussions with AbM members; community visits I participated in with AbM; community and office meetings; and general events which took place while doing my fieldwork (*e.g.* opening of new a branch; election).

Similarly to the experience described by DeWalt and DeWalt (2002), the longer I spent in the field with some of AbM members, the more open they were about their perspectives and views.[78] In many cases, important information would have been missed without engaging in a participatory manner. In some cases I believe I gained trust – *e.g.* being invited to hiding places and safe houses of Kennedy victims, and

[78] DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) describe that at the beginning of their fieldwork research, when they inquired about witchcraft, individuals would deny that there was any such believe in the community. As months pass by, the same people that denied this information would recount stories of witchcraft.

family events – which helped me to gain a deeper understanding of perspectives, views, and context. By engaging, and at times having a role, in activities, I was able to gain an insight into those experiences described by individuals in interviews.

An important asset of my engagement with AbM activities was owning a car for the duration of my fieldwork. Because of limited access to public transport, and the fact that members do not have cars, I was often invited to activities as a driver. The car was also an important asset in times of crises and emergency, for example to take individuals to hospital, and quickly getting to an informal settlement after destructive shack fire(s).

My mobile phone played a significant role in this research. Through my mobile phone I was invited to meetings and events, able to contact individual members, and received requests for rides, help, and emotional support from some AbM members.[79]

Moreover, missed calls and please call me (PCM) SMS, from many members, gave me some insight into the power relations and resources dynamics inside AbM (see Chapter 6). As many researchers have experienced during their fieldwork (Pelckmans, 2009), these groups tend to consider researchers as wealthy. This often meant that, because researchers are better off than members it was ok to request the researcher to call back (especially if it was something related to the researcher's interest).

Lastly, the AbM website[80] – together with the AbM mailing list – contains information on the history and current situation of the organisation. I was able to collect information on legal action taken by the organisation; access press releases and reports of abuse against shack dwellers across South Africa. The AbM website contains a number of articles – from members as well as supporters and other organisations; it features photos and videos; transcripts of speeches, presentations and talks in South Africa and abroad. The website was an important tool for me to familiarize myself with

[79] See section 6.6.2.2, about my experience in receiving threats over the phone while conducting fieldwork.

[80] See Abahlali baseMjondolo website: http://www.abahlali.org

the organisation's activities, politics, and a way to keep me updated with events, causes, and some expressions of political voice.

3.2.5 Ethical Considerations and Confidentiality

This research duly considered measures to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents as far as possible and where necessary and appropriate. In every meeting/event I participated, I asked for permission of members present to audio record it. Every interviewee was briefed – either in English, isiZulu, or isiXhosa – about the scope of the interview and the general aim of the research. Interviewees were offered the opportunity to remain anonymous, and were given the option to agree or not to specific requests (*e.g.* to audio/video recording of the interview). All interviewees signed consent forms – the English and isiZulu[81] version is available in appendices 5 and 6, respectively. Although I obtained signed permissions from all interviewees to use their names, in the interest of protecting their identity, interviewees are not identified by name in this dissertation, only referred to by a code (*e.g.* AbM member 1).[82]

The fieldwork was conducted during a difficult period of AbM history. I had to adapt some approaches to interview individual members, which included giving support and building trust. A large group of members were evicted from Kennedy Road informal settlement, following violent attacks.[83] These members were scattered around Durban and rural areas, and most of the leadership were in hiding places – supported by Amnesty International and other local and international organisations, as well as individual supporters of AbM. At the time I was there, AbM organised a meeting, every Sunday, for the victims of the attacks. I was able to attend these meetings, first, while

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[81] Both isiZulu and isiXhosa share the same linguistic roots – Nguni language (Bantu languages) – and for this reason, are similar languages in which native speakers of both languages are able to communicate and read both languages without the need of translation.

[82] The consent for names to be used might have been a sign of trust rather than a real willingness to have their names published. Moreover, the use of the names of interview respondents does not add anything to the knowledge gained, veracity, or clarity of the information provided in this dissertation.

[83] I discuss the attacks in Chapters 5 and 6, sections 5.1.1 and 6.2.2, respectively.

providing support to a human rights lawyer who needed to collect testimonials from the victims. After attending a few meetings to collect the testimonials – from more than 40 families – I gained a certain level of trust – mostly appreciation for the volunteer work to collect the testimonials – and was subsequently invited to their hiding places to conduct interviews for this study. Although, afterwards, I was welcome to participate in the Sunday meetings, I did not attempt to conduct interviews for my research on these occasions. These meetings were important opportunities for the victims to discuss their situations and to support one another, conducting interviews there would have been insensitive and inappropriate. However, as a participant observer, these meetings provided me with some examples of the level of bonds, relationships and expectations among AbM members.

3.3. Data processing and analysis

Interviews and group discussions were content-coded using dedicated software. The codes are linked to the factors (*e.g.* trust and self-confidence) and the categories discussed in the literature review Chapter (*e.g.* social context and resources; see section 2.5 of previous Chapter). The categories – including the factors which make up these categories – and the interview questions were drawn up in tandem in an iterative process and thus inform one another. Using NVivo8 software, transcripts of interviews and other recorded material, I was able to code, structure and organise data collected as factors and under categories – including common themes, ideas, issues or questions – for subsequent analysis. The software provides a system to code and organise information from subjective and disorganised speech in interview recordings and transcripts. It is a heuristic device to make sense of the information gathered and not a rigid classification system or taxonomy of deconstructed speech. For this reason, data might be applicable to more than one coding category.

An important differentiation made in this dissertation is that all quotes from data have been transcribed *verbatim*, with minor grammatical corrections for the purpose of clarity of language.

The following sections outline the categories used for coding and organising the data.

3.3.1 Personal Experiences and Background (PEB) [84]

Within this category are responses providing information about respondents' background characteristics, prior to AbM membership. The responses that fall within this category relate to their membership, and/or participation, in other groups or organisations – such as student unions, work unions, anti-apartheid movements, church and etc. – and individuals' description of these experiences. If respondents were involved in the past with other organisations, they were asked about their engagement in activities, roles, responsibilities, and what has changed in their life after their participation in that – or those – particular organisation(s).

Even though this represents only a partial description of individuals' personal experiences and background (PEB) – excluding important aspects of community life – this category is mostly used for comparison when looking at the current AbM environment. Furthermore, the events AbM members choose to share in the interviews "are at least a subset of those that made a meaningful contribution to their development as they see it" (Watts *et al.*, 2003, p.190). In other words, what respondents choose to reveal is significant because they self-identified these episodes as important in their political voice development.

General demographic information was also discussed, such as gender, age, nationality, home region – if moved from rural areas, when did that happen and for what reason(s) – religion, first language – mostly to identify different ethnical groups – education level, language skills (proficiency in English), if they own or rent a shack; employment status; and income (even if coming from donations, family, or government grant).[85]

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[84] Chapter 4, on contextual background, provides more information which supports the personal experiences and background analysis in Chapter 6.

[85] This data was presented in this Chapter in section 3.2.2.

Moreover, participants were asked about the availability of ICTs' – prior to and after joining AbM –, individual use, and how they communicate, with whom and for what purposes. Interviewees were asked about access to internet and mobile phone – *e.g.* if they had access to a computer and internet, where, how and cost of access (*e.g.* time paid at internet cafés and transportation to access points); if they owned a mobile phone, or had access through someone else's (family, friend); how much they spent per month on airtime; what percentage of that expenditure was dedicated to AbM related activities. Furthermore, for what purposes, and with whom, they were using ICTs, and specific tools (*e.g.* SMS, email, chat), and how this related to AbM activities (*e.g.* organising meetings, mobilizing, passing on information). General accounts of ICTs' use could be described by a respondent, while explaining the links and context in which they took place.

3.3.2 Social context

This category focuses on the context of AbM, and contains responses about the period since individuals joined AbM up to the data collection point (January to June 2010). Social context is found in the communication processes and personal interactions described in interviews and observed through participant observation. Social context includes participation in activities, meetings, exchanges with members (and non-members), family, religion, and communities, which were established or affected following their joining of AbM. This means that the social context only covers relations that are connected to AbM of which individuals are part of. As described in the literature review Chapter, much of the dynamics which compose collective processes of social movements, can be identified through social context.

Data categorised as social context contains information relating to why they decided to join AbM and under what circumstances. Furthermore, descriptions about which activities, events, they took part in, in which way and what they consider the most important activities carried out by AbM. Information about whom they related to, for the activities described – member and non-member of AbM – and what kind of responsibilities they had (*e.g.* organising transportation for meetings, calling the

housing department). Beyond organisational aspects, descriptions of personal links – *e.g.* emotional support – that might have been created as a result of their engagement with AbM. Statements about group dynamics and individual's influence within the organisation, are also categorised here.

The objective was to identify factors such as the ones suggested in the literature review Chapter – *e.g.* solidarity, trust, sense of belonging, development of capabilities (related to collective action), self-organisation, as well as an indication of the importance of ICTs within AbM activities.

3.3.3 Resources

Within the resources category, data was collected on the channels of communication, opportunities, and development of skills, capabilities and experiences generated by, for example, the interactions, participation in events, and interpersonal links identified within AbM (social context). These include, for instance, identifying whether exchanges with external supporters or experts can support the development of skills and capabilities.

Collecting data on an individual's perspectives on ways to communicate (face-to-face or ICTs based) are another important focus of this category. Understanding whether there is a difference between different channels of communication may enable the identification of how these different channels of communication affect the development of skills and capabilities. Interview questions asked about information on language used to communicate, perceived difference in use of technologies, preferred means of communication, as well as reasons and purposes for the communication.

3.3.4 Sense of Agency

The aim of this category is to identify some of the common factors amongst AbM members, which reflect individuals' feelings of being capable and empowered to act. As suggested in the literature review Chapter, factors such as solidarity, self-

confidence and independency represent indicators of sense of agency. This category thus contains data about motivations behind joining actions, reactions to government policy, speaking up, etc. It represents the link between attitudes and action.

Descriptions by respondents about the use of ICTs, or whether the demand to use emerged, are described in this category. It might include, for instance, the importance of solidarity and self-confidence as incentives for ICTs use. Descriptions of events such as crises, conflict resolution, mobilization, where the need for ICTs was required, might provide with context to understand the choice, and motivation, behind the use of these technologies.

3.3.5 Reflection

Data on reflection was collected and analysed through an individuals' self-reported perceptions and reflective dialogue.[86] Reflection contains two different contexts – before and after joining AbM. However, this category is fuzzy as there is no direct question asked about an individual's reflection, but general questions about experiences, views, and interpretations of actions and events.

This category includes, for example, experiences of realization, development of emotions and views on skills and ICTs being used for AbM related activities. The ability to identify changes (*e.g.* knowledge, awareness) represents the process of reflecting.

3.3.6 Action: Political Voice

This category contains information on actions, or political voice, of AbM members after they joined the organisation. It is important, however, to make a distinction between an individual's political voice and his or her contribution to organisational political voice. The organisational political voice includes different actions (*e.g.* handling of court cases, contributing to the website, *etc.*), which do not necessarily

[86] Reflective dialogue refers to the collective opportunities, in which individuals reflect together. See further description in the literature review Chapter, section 2.5.5.

represent the voice of individual members. However, indirectly, the organisational political voice, may have an effect, or feeds back into, the individuals' expression of political voice.

An individuals' political voice can be expressed in different ways. For instance, through the choice and conscious participation in AbM's expression of political voice – *e.g.* marches, campaigns, *etc*. Participating in internal events and actively expressing their views – *e.g.* meetings, forums, camps; by using the information acquired, experiences, skills and capabilities to engage with local councillors, government officials, services providers, *etc*. – might be considered as other forms of expression.

More concrete identification of the use of ICTs for the expression of political voice is included in this category. At the organisational level, for instance, AbM's publications (*e.g.* press releases, critical articles, web content) represent a source of political voice representative of the grassroots organisation's decisions and critiques. At the individual level, examples of mobile phone use to communicate with the media, or to discuss issues with government officials also fall into this category.

3.4 Limitations, problems, and observations

Case studies can suffer from selection bias due to sampling errors (*e.g.* subject self-selection) or when the researcher fails to collect data that is representative of the population target (George and Bennett, 2004). I was aware of this issue while doing fieldwork, and have attempted to broaden data collection to be as representative as possible. However, using referrals from one interviewee to another interviewee, face-to-face meetings, visits to communities, and events may have led to a lock-in to a group of members who were active during the period of data collection. Members who have not been actively participating in AbM's activities during the 5 months of data collection may thus have been under-represented in this study.

Going to different community branches of AbM was an approach to increase the representativeness of the sample, as well as trying to interview members who were

not visibly leading AbM activities or speaking in meetings. However, it did not have much influence on my access to absent or less-engaged AbM members.

Moreover, not all members I approached were willing to give their time for interviews. Some only accepted after we discussed some basic logistical points – *e.g.* how long it would take, what is all about, why I wanted to talk to them. In a few cases, I was able to conduct interviews after a relationship based on trust was established. However, in some particular cases, I had to be extra careful not to abuse relationships, which were established through dependency and/or gratitude.[87]

This meant, for instance, being aware of interviewees' personal crises and stressing periods, in which it would be inappropriate to ask for an interview. This included, for example, understanding that some leader, who were often under pressure, may have agreed to devote time to an interview – based on our relationship – when in fact they had more pressuring things to attend to.

[87] By dependency I refer to a few interviewees who have benefited from – directly or indirectly – my resources and work (*e.g.* car rides, writing press statements, *etc.*). By gratitude I refer to some individuals which I have help by collecting their testimonials to a human rights lawyer (see this Chapter, section 3.2.5).

4. Contextual Background

Introduction

The present Chapter provides a brief background on South Africa, since the end of apartheid and the election of a black president, Nelson Mandela. It includes a description of the social policies of the ruling party – the African National Congress (ANC) – in regard to poverty alleviation and housing, which directly affect shack dwellers. It then moves on to give an overview on informal settlements, social structures and divisions, and how the combination of these factors impact upon the shack dwellers' lack of political voice.

The last part of this Chapter describes the conditions leading to the rise of new social movements and grassroots organisations in South Africa. It includes an overview on how these movements and organisations experience criticism and are disregarded by government authorities and traditional media. The Chapter concludes with a description of ICTs in the context of social movements and grassroots organisations in South Africa.

The information presented in this Chapter helps to put in to context the socio-political environment in which Abahlali baseMjondolo exists. It provides an important basis for the analysis of the case study data.

4.1 South Africa: context

South Africa was governed under a white minority apartheid regime from 1948, until the establishment of a non-racial democracy in 1994 in which a coalition led by the African National Congress (ANC) won the majority of seats and elected Nelson

Mandela as president.[88] South Africa's first black president signalled a dramatic new beginning for the country.

The ANC, as the leading government party, has instituted sweeping changes. These included passing and implementing legislation which enacted, most notably, the deracialization of state institutions and introduced a new constitution (Heller, 2009). However, post-apartheid South Africa under the leadership of the ANC has shifted "away from the social democratic ideology of the ANC's Freedom Charter[89]" (Gibson, 2008, p.697). In the first 13 years, after ANC came to power, South Africa has enjoyed economic growth. However, the number of South Africans living in extreme poverty – on less than US$ 1 a day – has more than doubled (Alexander and Mngxitama, 2011).

Deeply ingrained inequalities, based on race, are still a dominant feature of South African society. Although some divisions might now resemble a class divide, rather than a race divide, the majority of population in poorer areas is still largely black, or non-white (Smith, 2003). Black Africans, nearly 80% of the population, suffer from unemployment rates of around 30%, compared with 7% of white Africans (Lehohla, 2010). Black households earn only 16% of average white household income, and 61.9% of the black African population live below the poverty line (Statistics South Africa, 2012).[90]

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[88] A coalition between the ANC and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the South African Communist Party, won 62% of votes, however, just short of the two-thirds majority required to form a Constitutional Assembly. Hence, the ANC formed a "Government of National Unity" with the National Party and the Inkatha Freedom Party, to reach the required majority (Southall, 1994).

[89] The Freedom Charter was a document elaborated by the ANC and its allies in 1955, when liberation was a distant goal. The charter, which is still used as a manifesto can be regarded as a normative, aspirational, basis for ANC. It includes statements such as: "The national wealth of our country, the heritage of South Africans, shall be restored to the people;" (South African Congress Alliance, 1955).

[90] South Africa does not have an official poverty line, and for this reason, South Africa government combines several poverty line standards. In this particular case, the lower-bound and upper-bound poverty lines, include food and non-food items; and international poverty lines ($1.25 and $2.50 corrected for Purchasing Power Parity (Statistics South Africa, 2012)). It is important to note that these figures are contested, and figures diverge somewhat. However, the trend in most datasets is similar: a disparity of income, employment, and poverty along racial markers, disproportionately affect South Arica's black population.

The issue of land ownership is an important remnant of the apartheid system. ANC's flagship Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP)[91] aimed to redistribute 30% of agricultural land to black Africans within the first five years of democracy. Yet, less than 4% has changed hands from white to black ownership (Alexander and Mngxitama, 2011; Mngxitama, 2006). Over 80% of land is still owned by white farmers, corporations, and the state (Mngxitama, 2006). Landownership retains the boundaries established during apartheid and follows its land distribution patterns (Huchzermeyer, 2003, 2004). Among the reasons for failure to follow through with policies aiming at reducing poverty and the social gap is the ANC limited political will and growing corruption among its officials (Mbeki, 2012; The Economist, 2012).

The problem is most acute in urban and peri-urban areas. Since the end of apartheid, migration towards the cities, associated with increased pressure on urban social resources and endemic poverty, has led to the growth and emergence of new informal settlements (also known as *imijondolo*) (Morris and Hindson, 1992; Ross, 2005; Skuse and Cousins, 2007; Thomas, 2006).[92]

The South African government committed itself explicitly to address this issue. The South African 1996 post-apartheid constitution included a variety of specific rights. For example, Chapter 2, Section 26 of the South African Constitution (Republic of South Africa, 1996) establishes access to adequate housing and protection against arbitrary eviction.[93] The "Prevention of Illegal Eviction of and Unlawful Occupation of the Land Act" (known as the PIE Act[94]) and the Breaking New Ground (BNG)[95] policy, were

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[91] The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) was set out by the ANC as a formal policy program with "specific targets to be met in a wide range of social and economic spheres" (Blumenfeld, 1997, p.67), which included access clean water and electricity; land reform; provision of housing for the poor.

[92] Since the 1980s, a number of informal settlements started to emerge, as a result of a major reduction of government construction of formal township housing while "the state battled to contain a growing urban rebellion and waged war in Angola" (COHRE, 2008, p.38).

[93] Including repealing the "Prevention of Illegal Squatting Act No. 1 of 1951 with all its amendments, and the Slums Act No. 76 of 1979" (Huchzermeyer, 2011, p.9)

[94] The act stipulates consideration of rights to vulnerable groups (*e.g.* children, elderly) and renders illegal the eviction of residents unless authorized by a court order and complying with a number of

aimed at giving rights to residents of informal settlements and to create alternatives to inadequate housing, including *in situ* upgrading (Chance, 2011b; COHRE, 2008; Huchzermeyer, 2006b; Mitlin and Mogaladi, 2009).

The new urban migrant poor and residents of informal settlements (shack dwellers) have suffered from arbitrary and, at times, unlawful conduct by the South African government despite progressive housing policies, legislation, and programmes (Amnesty International, 2012; Atkinson, 2007; Barchiesi, 2006; Bullock, 2013; Duncan, 2013). This means that, despite policies such as BNG and the rights granted by the new constitution, shack dwellers have been forcibly evicted by the police and eviction units[96] – under the authority of local government officials – and left destitute of rights such as temporary housing (COHRE, 2008; Keepile, 2010; Moatshe, 2014). Under 'orderly urbanisation' policies and programmes (*e.g.* Slum Clearance Programme) a number of restrictions and controls have been imposed on the growth and upgrading of informal settlements (Huchzermeyer, 2011).[97]

Within an urban economy that is significantly dependent on a property economy, South African shack dwellers have no place in the city. As Huchzermeyer described:

> "Official urban planning in African cities deals with informal settlements either by stamping them out and replacing them, at best relocating their inhabitants to formally planned, regulated and taxed environments, or by applying the exception of in situ upgrading (…) The management of human mobility in terms of such policies is concerned with the needs and perceived desires of a skilled middle class." (2011, p.69)

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procedures (COHRE, 2008). In some cases, where residents cannot provide for themselves, the state must secure adequate housing (Chance, 2011b).

[95] "BNG advocated concrete steps to avoid the replication of apartheid segregation. It also recommended upgrades where ever possible and sought to democratise planning with a view to include communities in planning their development via locally constructed deals with community organisations" (COHRE, 2008, p.8).

[96] Notably, the famous blue and red ants units, which are private security workers dressed in distinctive red or blue overalls and construction helmets (Dempster, 2001).

[97] An example cited by Huchzermeyer (2011) where South African Government has been using their own interpretation of the "Millennium Declaration Goal Target 11 of Cities Without Slums" to systematically demolish and eradicate slums, instead of upgrading its living conditions. The Slum Clearance Programme, for instance, was aimed to "eradicate shacks by building houses and taking coercive steps to prevent new shacks from being erected and new settlements from being created" (COHRE, 2008, p.9)

Informal settlements – and Townships[98], once commemorated by the ANC in "liberation histories" as "heroic battlegrounds" against apartheid (Chance, 2011b, p.118) – have become, according to some commentators, areas in which a repressive state approach is exercised (Amnesty International, 2012; Birkinshaw, 2009; Bryant, 2005; Cooper-Knock, 2008; Pithouse, 2011). Since the end of apartheid, a number of informal settlements across South African cities have been demolished and residents removed, often by armed police or security forces (Chance, 2011b; Plessis, 2006).

Evicted residents are relocated to newly built "RDP houses", or to transit camps, awaiting the construction of RDP houses. RDP houses are often located in semi-rural areas, and miles away from the city.[99] The new formal settlements often lack access to basic services, such as appropriate health care or schools.[100] Distance from work places and the associated transportation costs (as well as time) creates difficulties for employment and social activities. A number of commentators assert that crime tends to be a problem in these settlements, as a consequence of lacking infrastructure, inadequate provision of public services, and poor employment opportunities (Ambert, 2006; COHRE, 2008; Gibson, 2008; Huchzermeyer, 2011; Hunter and Posel, 2012). Frequently, relocated residents return to re-build their shacks or relocate closer to urban centres (Ross, 2005).

Transit camps, the temporary holding sites for people who are in the process of being relocated, exhibit many of the challenges described above, such as distance from basic services and work opportunities. Transit camp shelters often look like containers, which are divided into single rooms, of roughly 26 square meters meant to accommodate one family (Chance, 2011b). These shelters are built in fenced off land,

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[98] In South Africa, the term township is used to refer to a urban living area, in the suburb of a city, of predominantly black population, "formerly officially designated for black occupation by apartheid legislation" (Oxford English Dictionary).

[99] In situ upgrading of selected informal settlements is rare, only available for a few households, and only in large populated informal settlements – a large proportion of residents from informal settlements are displaced (Huchzermeyer, 2011).

[100] An example is the provision (or lack thereof) of essential anti-retro viral HIV/Aids medication and treatment, which tends to be difficult to access (Chance, 2011b; Thomas, 2006).

tightly packed, uninsulated, made of temporary materials such as corrugated tin (Huchzermeyer, 2011).

Compounding the problems inside transit camps and informal settlements, there is evidence of entrenched corruption in the RDP rehousing process. This includes evidence of nepotism, clientelism, illegal selling of title deeds, and manipulation of reallocations (Atkinson, 2007; Blair, 2006; Rubin, 2011).[101] RDP house allocations are managed with housing lists. However, the lists are often manipulated and subject to corrupted practices by government officials and local councils (Blair, 2006; Rubin, 2011). Moreover, according to Pithouse "[i]n general, shack owners get onto the housing list but shack renters are left homeless. It is not unusual for more people to be left homeless than relocated" (2008, p.74).

Despite numerous allegations and exposure of fraud and corruption, including construction companies responsible for these projects, these are rarely investigated, and often ignored (Atkinson, 2007; Moore, 2013). These have probably contributed to the housing backlog of 2.3 million units (Prinsloo, 2011).

Within this context, residents of informal settlements perceive corruption as widespread (Rubin, 2011). Moreover, this context contributes to feelings of marginalisation, fosters a perceived lack of opportunity to engage with the state and feeling abandoned (Heller, 2009; Skuse and Cousins, 2007; Wasserman, 2011).

4.1.1 Life in informal settlements in South Africa

This section outlines aspects of the physical and social realities of living in an informal settlement.

[101] During the fieldwork conducted for this research I was able to collect anecdotal evidence from people who were moved to transit camps 'temporarily' (up to 3 months) but stayed there in excess of 4 years and without assurance about the delivery of houses. In a few cases, residents described that their names have 'disappeared' from housing lists.

Emergence and statistics

There are approximately 10 million South Africans (about 16,3% of households across the country) living in informal dwellings, such as shacks or shanties in informal settlements or in backyards (World Bank Institute, 2012). Despite the millions of houses delivered through the RDP programme, the number of shack dwellers has increased since the ANC came to power in 1994 (Magebhula, 2011).

Informal settlements, although having existed for decades, have grown and expanded intensely in post-apartheid era. Total urban population has grown from 52 to 62%, from 1994 to 2014, mostly driven by intense migration from rural populations in search of better work and education opportunities in urban environments (Fieuw, 2014). The emergence and expansion of informal settlements was to a large extent a result of rural-to-urban migration, but they also include, rising unemployment, social inequalities, reduced marriage rates, and the greater mobility of women (Hunter, 2010).

Structure, health and security

Physically, informal settlements are hazardous environments. Most shacks are made from a combination of construction materials, including: mud, wood, zinc sheets, corrugated metal, plastic, and/or cardboard (Ross, 2005; Smit, 2006). Sanitation, access to water, and electricity is usually lacking (Seekings and Nattrass, 2005). Public toilets and water taps, where available, tend to be overcrowded (Govender *et al.*, 2011). Unsanitary conditions, including open sewage, present a health hazard to residents, especially young children. Due to its, unofficial, unplanned, illegal occupation status, the government of South Africa is not obliged, nor willing, to provide basic services such as water and electricity, to its residents (Huchzermeyer, 2004).

Shack fires are common, usually caused by candles, paraffin lamps, or illegal electricity connections. The density of shack settlements, especially in urban areas, and the use

of flammable building materials, aggravates the problem (Chance, 2011b). On average, fires result in about one death every other day (Berkinshaw, 2008).[102]

Informal settlements have the highest rates of HIV infection in South Africa (Ambert, 2006; Camlin *et al.*, 2010; Connolly *et al.*, 2004; Hunter, 2007), and HIV positive residents are frequently stigmatized (Kahn, 2004; Kranzer *et al.*, 2011; Mills, 2006). Women are at higher risk of HIV infection (O'Hara Murdock *et al.*, 2003), and are often victims of sexual and domestic abuse (Chance, 2011b; Kalichman *et al.*, 2005).

Social structures and division

Yet, informal settlements may differ greatly from one another and are also at a constant and rapid change. As Huchzermeyer explains:

> "As the process of informality responds to changing pressures, newcomers add structures, settlements densify or expand, occupants change, a rental market may emerge and expand, and may be reversed, leadership emerges and may be challenged, struggles for formal recognition and servicing may be waged, sections may be bulldozed and others may consolidate" (2011, p.77).[103]

The idea of social cohesion or even the use of the term "community" is often a misnomer to describe informal settlements (Friedman, 1993). Informal settlements are diverse places, divided along race, class, age, language, and ethnicity (Morris and Hindson, 1992), with complex internal social and economic dynamics (Bremner, 1994; Crankshaw, 1996; Smit, 2006).[104]

Social divisions between different ethnic groups (*e.g.* Indian descendants, Zulus, Xhosa, Sotho) within informal settlements are a cause of disputes and concern among

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[102] Berkinshaw (2008), quoting from South Africa National Fire Statistics, stated that in Durban alone, a shack fire is estimated to happen at least once a day.

[103] Huchzermeyer uses the term "informality" to refer to the unplanned, illegal occupations. The government refers to these as informal settlements.

[104] Sources of these differences include: large-scale migration to urban centres and rapid expansion of settlements with scarce resources, such as land, water, and basic infrastructure. These scarcities have played a central role in violence and conflicts between residents of townships and informal settlements (Morris and Hindson, 1992; Taylor, 2004).

residents (Morris and Hindson, 1992; Patel, 2012). Minority migrants such as Xhosa migrants to Kwazulu-Natal, have often suffered prejudice and political and social exclusion within informal settlements with Zulu predominance (Bremner, 1994).

Poor foreigners and illegal immigrants, who do not qualify for the state's capital housing subsidy (Crankshaw, 1996; Smit, 2006), have to rely on informal settlements for housing. Often, the illegal status means that they are also subject to high levels of exploitation and xenophobia (Maharaj, 2009). In May 2008, xenophobic attacks occurred in Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town targeting mainly African foreigners living in informal settlements (Peberdy, 2010). The attacks demonstrated that "social exclusion by the state has contributed to violent social exclusion among the poor" (Huchzermeyer, 2011, p.59).

The social divisions described above are among some of the reasons why informal settlements suffer from high levels of internal conflict. These can be aggravated by other factors. For instance, the prospect of development or unequal access to public services, creates tension among residents, at times escalating to violence (Bénit, 2002; Bremner, 1994; Crankshaw, 1996; Huchzermeyer, 2001; Patel, 2013). Illegal immigrants are predominantly threatened with eviction by plans to upgrade informal settlements (Crankshaw, 1996). Besides illegal immigrants, shack renters also have limited chances of being allocated a RDP house as the allocation is bound to ownership of the shack, not the residential status of the occupant (Pithouse, 2008).

Women, in particular, have been affected by traditional (or tribal) social divisions within informal settlements. Women are to a large extent excluded from local political activity (Beall, 2005a; Thomas, 2002), apart from engagement with church activities (Thomas, 2002) and some local community activities (Mosoetsa, 2004).

Governance structures within informal settlements tend to be exclusionary and reinforce existing social and economic inequalities such as the ones described above. Relationships between shack dwellers, local community leaders and committees, and government institutions, are often complicated by corruption, nepotism, even violence,

and dominated by certain groups (Atkinson, 2007; Bénit, 2002; Blair, 2006).[105] However, there is only limited research on the impact of these factors on informal settlements structure (Huchzermeyer, 2011).

Within rural and peri-urban informal settlements much of the leadership is dominated by traditional structures and tends to be in the hands of chiefs, who are rarely democratically elected (Beall, 2005b).[106] Chiefs' rule is based on patronage (and cronyism), often closely linked to tribal affiliation, political parties and local government (Carter and May, 1999; Francis, 2002; Kessel and Oomen, 1997).

Chiefs in KwaZulu[107], designated a Bantustan (or black state) created by the apartheid government as a homeland for ethnic amaZulu people, were leaders in anti-apartheid movements – such as Inkatha in rural areas (later called Inkatha Freedom Party – IFP), and the ANC in peri-urban and urban areas.[108] Through association with these movements, which later meant close relationships with government officials, chiefs claimed land rights, and provision of amenities and services in their areas, which in turn helped to consolidate their control over rural and informal settlements (Morris and Hindson, 1992).

Likewise, residents of urban (and peri-urban) informal settlements have been affected by nepotism and patronage relations which suppressed the development of democratic structures, such as electing a community committee (Botes and van

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[105] Corrupt practices have been documented in various reports, see for example: "Corruption and neglect lead to township riots against ANC" (Blair, 2006); various cases of violence against shack dwellers have been documented, see for example: "Amnesty International 2012 South Africa Report" (Amnesty International, 2012) and "South Africa: The Criminal Injustice System" (Duncan, 2013).

[106] Beall (2005b) explains that the position of the chiefs tends to be hereditary, maintained through a hierarchical and patriarchal system. Chiefs often employ different social control patterns – including witchcraft – to exert power.

[107] In 1994, KwaZulu was merged with the province of Natal, and became the Kwazulu-Natal province.

[108] Disputes between political parties have intensified and often resulted in violent clashes between residents of different informal settlements (Bénit, 2002; Bremner, 1994; Crankshaw, 1996). Social divisions between rural and urban-based squatters correspond to political affiliations. In Kwazulu-Natal (KZN), rural settlements are predominately IFP, whereas townships and urban informal settlement are predominantly ANC (Morris and Hindson, 1992).

Rensburg, 2000; de Wit and Berner, 2009; Marx and Charlton, 2003).[109] In Durban (and its metropolitan area – eThekwini municipality), even informal settlements that have, in principle, elected community development committees (CDCs), demonstrate a similar style of leadership.[110] In some cases, arbitrary decisions by CDCs dictated the parameters, who, and under what circumstances local development projects would unfold (Patel, 2012).

Close links to political parties have also consolidated the power of CDCs (Patel, 2013), and in exchange of favours – or the expectancy of service delivery – CDCs have often delivered informal settlement as voting banks to the 'partner' political party, such as the ANC (Birkinshaw, 2009).

As much as clientelism, nepotism and corruption has discouraged the political mobilisation of informal settlements' residents (Huchzermeyer, 2004), it has not prevented the emergence of new social movements focused on concerns affecting shack dwellers (Alexander and Mngxitama, 2011; Grossman and Ngwane, 2011).

4.1.2 Post-apartheid Social Movements

In the late 1990s the post-apartheid *honeymoon period*[111] came to an end (Habib and Taylor, 2001). Dissatisfaction with state and corporate power among the poor

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[109] Similar to rural and peri-urban areas, while having no de jure rights to land, urban shack dwellers have historically turned to local "squatter leaders" to access a piece of land and services (Huchzermeyer, 2004; Morris and Hindson, 1992). Urban informal settlements – either located on public or private land – were regularly run by an intermediary or the person or group who exerts control of the area/land. These can be people with money (or land owners), political connections or simply those who got there first (Birkinshaw, 2009). To live in informal settlements, shack dwellers usually have to pay a fee to access the settlement and the rental of land/shack (Durand-Lasserve and Royston, 2002).

[110] Some election of CDC can take years to happen, and in some cases CDC members were elected by a few residents present in local meetings (Patel, 2012, 2013). In some cases, CDC are appointed by political parties which have a strong hold over an area, and do not allow independent political organising (Birkinshaw, 2009).

[111] The *honeymoon period* is an often-used term to denote the time after Nelson Mandela's election, portrayed as a time of great expectations and excitement about the new democracy. It is also the period when the ANC government acted to demobilize rebellious street politics of the 1980s, through the introduction of new demands for compliant citizenship (*e.g.* end of boycotts and payment of electricity bills)(Chance, 2011b).

provoked a number of protests across the country, and new social movements and SMOs started to emerge (Barchiesi, 2006; Chiumbu, 2012; Grossman and Ngwane, 2011; McKinley and Naidoo, 2004; Tselapedi, 2013; Wasserman, 2007).

Although not all of these groups were adversarial to the ANC government (Ballard, 2005; McKinley and Naidoo, 2004), they have often been fiercely opposed by government officials and attacked in official statements (Barchiesi, 2006; McKinley and Naidoo, 2004; Wasserman, 2007) and in broadcast and print media (Willems, 2010). According to Ballard and colleagues the intent was to delegitimize these social movements as troublemakers (Ballard *et al.*, 2006a), or as the "loony" left (Jacobs, 2004).

Protests and marches were traditional ways of expressing grievances for social movements under the apartheid regime, and continue to serve this function following the end of apartheid. There are several features that are common at protests and marches, for example, using slogan t-shirts, carrying banners, singing political songs, and doing the traditional South African toyi-toyi[112] dance (Willems, 2010). These expressions of political voice have been framed in terms of conflict, and correspondingly met with disproportional use of crowd control by local authorities. Demonstrators are often met with police brutality, including unlawful arrest, harassment, beatings, the use of firearms with live ammunition, frequently resulting in fatalities (Chance, 2011b).

Despite repression and criticism, some social movements and SMOs emerged to confront government policies and failure to address socio-economic rights. The Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), directly challenged government's HIV/AIDS policies (Gibson, 2006; Loudon, 2010; Tselapedi, 2013), while the Landless People's Movement (LPM) confronted the slow pace of land redistribution (Ballard *et al.*, 2006b; Huchzermeyer, 2004).

[112] Originally from Zimbabwe the toyi-toyi dance usually includes stomping of the feet and chanting during protests. It was a popular dance used in protests against the former apartheid government, and during funerals of activists (Seidman, 2001).

Other post-apartheid social movements and SMOs, were concerned with issues such as of lack of basic services, evictions and land tenure security (Ballard *et al.*, 2006b). These groups —including the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee (SECC), the Anti-Privatization Forum (APF), the Anti-Eviction Campaign (AEC) – attempted to organise the poor "to resist local, provincial and national governments' attempts to cut off electricity and water, and to evict residents" (Ballard *et al.*, 2006b, p.2). These SMOs, although often described as separate entities, are cross-affiliated and often share organisational structures and leadership (Wasserman, 2005).

Yet, although these groups are, by and large, focused on communities' struggles and are composed of a majority of black and poor, there is the concern about who are the dominating voices inside these social movements and grassroots organisations (Sinwell, 2010). According to Alexander and Mngxitama "in most post-apartheid social movements, white voices dominate and articulate the programmes on behalf of assaulted blacks" (2011, p.66). The authors go further, stating that "whites are still controlling black voices" (Smith, 2002), questioning the legitimacy of these groups.

There is little doubt that apartheid has had an effect on the distribution of power in social movements and grassroots organisations. As Majavu describes:

> "Owing to the legacy of the apartheid system, the intellectual revolutionary vanguard in South Africa tends to be educated middle class white activists who research and write about social movements for journals. In the academic/intellectual circles, it is this intellectual revolutionary vanguard that sets the tone and the perimeters of the debate regarding social movements in post-apartheid South Africa" (2012).

These white middle class activists, are university educated and have a secured employment, which makes it hard for black poor activists to compete (Siwisa, 2008) or feel confident enough to lead.

4.1.3 ICTs in South African social movements and grassroots organisations

The use of ICTs by social movements in South Africa has not received much attention (Loudon, 2010). Yet, like social movements across the world, ICTs have been used by many South African social movements and grassroots organisations to mobilize; communicate with like minded groups (nationally and internationally) (Ballard *et al.*, 2006b; Dawson, 2012; Loudon, 2010); and provide visibility to their causes – or to counteract the negative way they are portrayed in local media (McKinley and Naidoo, 2004; Wasserman, 2007).

Grassroots organisations such as TAC and AFP, rely on websites, email and other internet tools to support a variety of activities, including information awareness, fundraising, and communication across different organisations (Loudon, 2010; Wasserman, 2005, 2007). AEC has been using mobile phones to organise demonstrations, rallies, and community meetings (Chiumbu, 2012). However, a question remains as to who has access and control of these technologies among grassroots organisations with poor and marginalised memberships.

Data on internet usage in South Africa shows great inequality. Among the 11% of the population who have access to the internet, the majority are wealthy white South Africans (Chiumbu, 2012; Fuchs and Horak, 2008; Internet World Stats, 2010; Kreutzer, 2009).

South Africa has the second highest mobile phone ownership in Africa (Chiumbu, 2012; James and Versteeg, 2007). However, tariffs for use (or “airtime”) are among the highest in the world, especially for the commonly used pre-paid, or pay as you go, schemes (Duncan, 2010; Smith, 2009). This means that the cost of mobile phone use can be prohibitively expensive or a limiting factor for use, especially for shack dwellers (Chiumbu, 2012; Wasserman, 2011).

Similar to what was found elsewhere in the world (Brinkman *et al.*, 2009; Donner, 2008b), South Africans adapted their use in response to high cost by using cheaper alternatives to talking, such as SMS, and "Please Call Me" SMS (Bidwell *et al.*, 2011; Chiumbu, 2012).[113] According to Chiumbu:

> "Shifting the burden of payment in this manner and at no cost to the requesting party can be a critical factor in enabling the two sides to communicate. Community members use 'please call me' within their community structures where the leaders' mobile phone number is known. Often, these calls are made, for instance, to verify dates for protests, to request urgent action when an eviction is taking place or just to connect with other members" (2012, p.201).

South African users have also adapted their language use for mobile phone tools such as SMS. One particular study shows that, English-isiXhosa[114] bilinguals prefer to use English, and a hybrid mixture between English and isi-Xhosa, than traditional isiXhosa language, when sending an SMS (Deumert and Masinyana, 2008).[115]

Besides language, culture and traditions might have also had an impact on South Africans' use of mobile phones – and the internet. Studies on Zulu societies, for instance, demonstrate that oral modes are still preferred to other modes of communication (Turner, 2005). In rural areas, as well as the preference for face-to-face exchanges, information needs to come from trusted sources (O'Farrell *et al.*, 1999). Altogether, these characteristics – although not particular of South Africa, but often observed in other African countries – created different challenges for the use of ICTs, in particular for marginalised groups such as shack dwellers.

Chiumbu (2012) observes that mobile phones do not replace traditional methods of social movement activism, but have created opportunities for expanding mobilization,

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[113] Usually taking into consideration the receiver's familiarity with the practice/technology, and financial ability to call back. This can also include the responsibility towards the sender, for example, women expecting the boyfriend to pay for the call; or a worker expecting the boss to pay for a work related call.

[114] Isi-Xhosa is one of the official languages of South Africa.

[115] The author further explains that "unlike European languages, African languages are only minimally represented in other electronic media, such as discussion boards, chat room, blogs, *etc.*: That is in contexts where many of the abbreviations, paralinguistic restitutions and non-standard spellings which now characterize language use on SMS were first established" (Deumert and Masinyana, 2008, p.128)

and to overcome the lack of supporting infrastructure (*e.g.* fully equipped offices). For some social movements in South Africa, mobile phones were not only used to mobilize and transmit political information, but have changed the identities and created communicative networks (Wasserman, 2011; Willems, 2010).

4.2 Conclusions

This Chapter has identified some of the most important forces and factors that shape the life of shack dwellers in South Africa. These offer opportunities to understand why shack dwellers are marginalised and lack a developed political voice. As the case study of Abahlali baseMjondolo (AbM) will show, some of the factors identified here (*e.g.* patronage systems and government dismissal of shack dwellers potential to speak for themselves) were observed within AbM. Yet, as the case study will also show, shack dwellers are under certain circumstances able to overcome these factors and develop an effective political voice.

The following Chapter provides a brief overview of AbM's structure and context, as well as some important events in its evolution.

5. Abahlali baseMjondolo – a case study

Introduction

This Chapter provides a background on Abahlali baseMjondolo (AbM), the grassroots organisation studied. It includes a brief overview of its history, major events, structure, the political voice of the organisation, and its use of ICTs.

5.1 Abahlali baseMjondolo (AbM)

Abahlali baseMjondolo is a grassroots organisation founded in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa. Abahlali baseMjondolo (AbM) – which means "people who live in shacks" in the isiZulu language – was founded in 2005, following a protest in the Kennedy Road Informal settlement[116] ("Kennedy" hereafter), in Durban. The protest involved blocking a road adjacent to the settlement. The protest followed a dispute over a piece of land earmarked for the residents of Kennedy. The Kennedy Road Development Committee (KRDC), an independent community development committee (CDC), negotiated with the municipality for a number of years, initially contesting the relocation of Kennedy residents.[117] The municipality conceded that the settlement would be upgraded *in situ*, and that the land adjacent would be used for this development. However, despite various public assurances to the residents of Kennedy the land was sold by the municipality for commercial development (Abahlali baseMjondolo, 2006d; Bryant, 2007; Cooper-Knock, 2008; Patel, 2011). When the sale of the land became public, members of KRDC and some residents engaged in a lengthy debate and decided to protest. The protest mobilized around 800 Kennedy residents.

[116] Kennedy Road informal settlement was found in the late 1970s, and its residents have suffered with many attempts of forced removal (Maharaj, 2002). Kennedy has now a population of over 6,000 people, where about 66% are isiZulu and 26% are isiXhosa (eThekwini Municipality, 2011).

[117] The residents of Kennedy were to be relocated to the Verulam area, as part of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). Verulam is located in a rural area about 25km from Kennedy, north of Durban. Access to public services, such as, schools, and healthcare is limited, and commutes to employment opportunities is more costly and burdensome (Patel, 2011).

Kennedy protestors were met with violence by the police, including the use of firearms and physical violence. Police excesses were documented on film and reported in national news (Chance, 2011b). Fourteen residents, including two school children, were selected at random and arrested, charged with "public violence" (Duncan, 2013). Two days later, on Human Rights Day,[118] over a thousand people staged an "illegal" march[119] to the Sydenham police station were the fourteen residents were held, demanding the release of the "Kennedy Road 14". The protesters were claiming solidarity with the detainees, stating that: "if they are criminals then we all are…" (Pithouse, 2006c, p.23). The Kennedy protest and media coverage of the protest attracted the attention of residents of other informal settlements, who later met with Kennedy residents to share their stories of dissatisfaction with, and mistrust in, government promises. Residents from these informal settlements started to work together to organise protests. These exchanges led to the creation of the Abahlali baseMjondolo (AbM) movement.

Since 2005, AbM has grown to several thousands of members,[120] across more than 30 informal settlements.[121] Members call AbM a social movement and, by virtue of their self-mobilization and creation of links with other shack dwellers, and organisations, it could be described as such (Gibson, 2007). However, as described in Chapter 3, AbM has clear barriers when it comes to membership affiliation (see more on AbM's structure below), and is thus more akin to a grassroots (social movement) organisation. For this reason AbM is analysed in this dissertation as a grassroots organisation.

AbM has created links with other organisations such as the Anti-Eviction Campaign, the Unemployed People's Movement, and the Rural Network.[122] AbM also gathered

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[118] Human Rights Day in South Africa commemorates the Sharpeville massacre of 1960.

[119] Illegal in the sense that it was staged without a state permission to protest.

[120] Definitive numbers are not available, estimates range between 15'000 and 30'000 members.

[121] The majority of AbM branches are located in the eThekwini municipality, but AbM has also one branch in the township of Khayelitsha, near Cape Town, Western Cape. AbM branches include not only informal settlements, but also transit camps, townships, and rural areas.

[122] Through these links, AbM, the Anti-Eviction Campaign, the Unemployed People's Movement, and the Rural Network formed the "Poor People's Alliance" coordinate their joint actions (Losier, 2009).

the support of a number of individuals and organisations, in South Africa and abroad, including lawyers, activists, academics, NGOs, and church groups. Through these links AbM has shared experiences, information, tactics, coordinated protests and campaigns, received funds, has received and provided support or joined other causes by making speeches or publishing articles (online and printed media); and achieved national and international media coverage (Chance, 2011b; Cooper-Knock, 2008).

Criticism

AbM has been selective in the choice of who it wished to work and collaborate with (Zikode, 2009).[123] This selectivity has led some authors to criticize AbM. For instance, Walsh (2008) accused AbM of favouritism, as well as being manipulated by those who they chose to work with. Sinwell (2010) suggests that AbM lacks the ability to challenge the status quo because a large number of AbM members are supporters of the ANC.

Gibson asserts that some perceive AbM members, and by extension shack dwellers, as a "'lumpenproletariat'[124] incapable of progressive organisation" (2008, p.704). There have been a number of reported attempts to discredit AbM by government officials. Statements suggested that AbM's protests were the work of outside agitators, manipulating the poor for their own political gain (Bryant, 2007; Chance, 2011b; Pithouse, 2006a). In one particular case the then mayor of eThekwini Municipality referred to AbM's marches as a "third force"[125], which is "highly pejorative and implies white manipulation" (Pithouse, 2006c, p.31). Another example is a meeting with a Member of Executive Council (MEC) for Housing in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) in late 2006. Invited AbM members were warned by officials of the housing department that AbM

[123] See further discuss in this Chapter and Chapter 6 (sections 6.2.1.2 and 6.5.1)

[124] Lumpenproletariat is a term originally used by Karl Max to define the "unorganised and unpolitical lower orders of society who are not interested in revolutionary advancement" (Oxford English Dictionary).

[125] The term "third" or "dark force" was used to refer to apartheid era secret police force operation, which "recruited spies in townships, and gathered 'information' through intimidation and torture" in an attempt to undermine and destroy the ANC (Chance, 2011b, p.xxii)

should cease speaking to the media, as well as working with a particular academic who these officials "identified as a 'foreign agent working to destabilize the country'" (Pithouse, 2008, p.84).[126]

5.1.1 The attacks on Kennedy Road

Since its creation AbM has endured extreme police brutality, illegal arrests, and threats. In 2009, a few months before conducting my fieldwork, Kennedy – where AbM had its head office – was attacked by self-identified ANC supporters (Chance, 2011b; Guy, 2010; Patel, 2009; Sacks, 2009).

On the night of the 26th September 2009 the attacks on Kennedy began to unfold. A group of armed Zulu men, chanting ethnically abusive slogans against Xhosa residents and AbM members, descended on the area, destroying shacks and beating residents. Leaders of AbM and the KRDC – also members of AbM – were targeted by the group, and had to flee their homes. Over the course of the night, two shack-dwellers were killed and many more injured. By the end of the 27th September 2009, over 30 shacks were destroyed, and an estimated 1000 people displaced (Chance, 2010b; Chance, 2011b; Hohwa, 2009).

Twelve members of AbM were arbitrarily arrested by the police. Nicknamed the "Kennedy 12", the men were charged as perpetrators of the Kennedy attacks – the charges included murder, attempted murder, and assault. Amnesty International accused South African authorities of failing "to conduct a full and impartial inquiry and to publicly and unequivocally condemn the apparently politically motivated violence" (Amnesty International, 2009). In July 2011, after more than a year and a half, the Kennedy 12 were acquitted of all charges against them and released from custody (Tolsi, 2012; War on Want, 2011). Durban Regional Court Magistrate, Sharon Marks, in her ruling noted that there were:

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[126] Although Richard Pithouse is the same white academic they refer to, this story was corroborated by other AbM members present at the meeting.

> "(…)"numerous contradictions and discrepancies in the state's case" and the lack of any reliable evidence to identify the accused. The court also found that police had directed some witnesses to point out members of Abahlali-linked organisations at the identification parade" (Amnesty International, 2012).

The charges against the Kennedy 12 were widely regarded as part of local ANC plan to undermine AbM (Chance, 2011b; Patel, 2011; The Witness, 2009). Less than 48 hours after the start of the attacks, the Provincial Minister for Transport, Safety and Security hosted a meeting and press conference at the Kennedy Community Hall, informing that the settlement had been "liberated" (Chance, 2010b; Pithouse, 2011; Sacks, 2009). Despite the fact that the armed group self-identified as ANC supporters (Chance, 2011b; Guy, 2010; Patel, 2009; Sacks, 2009) and the numerous threats against AbM members made by ANC officials, it was AbM that had to prove its innocence.[127]

The attacks sparked over 100 responses, including solidarity statements from other organisations, letters of concerns signed by activists and academics from around the world, online and printed news articles (in South Africa and abroad, including the UK, USA, Brazil, Italy), academic articles, organised protests at local universities in South Africa and abroad, and at South African embassies in London, New York, and Moscow (Abahlali baseMjondolo, 2009c; Gibson, 2011b).

Displaced AbM members lost their homes and possessions – some their source of income[128] – and had to go into hiding. Many of the victims received death threats, causing extreme emotional distress (Chance, 2010b). Most AbM leaders were also victims of the attacks, and had to deal with their own crisis, and support other victims.

The Kennedy attacks also affected AbM's structure and its ability to cope with crises. AbM's office was located in Kennedy, and had to be dismantled in a hurry. What was

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[127] In one particular case in October 2011, at a meeting with the Executive Mayor of the Ethekwini Metropolitan Municipality about the Kennedy attacks, a group of AbM members witnessed a senior official threatened Abahlali's president with violence (Amnesty International, 2012).

[128] Some members worked at the drop in clinic inside Kennedy, which ceased to operate after the attacks. Others worked in informal jobs in the area, or owned small shops inside Kennedy.

left in the office, including documents and equipment, was ransacked and looted (Chance, 2011b).

From the attacks until the re-establishment of AbM office in Central Durban, in February 2010, AbM members had no access to a telephone landline – an important communication tool for the organisation – or the internet.[129] AbM's leadership and members did not have a physical space to meet.

5.1.2 The Structure of AbM

AbM members are mainly black Africans, but also Indian[130], coloured[131], and white (very few members).[132] The vast majority of AbM members can be described as informal settlement shack dwellers, but the organisation also includes a small number of urban flat and rural dwellers. Women seem to represent a large portion of AbM members, which is reflected by their overwhelming presence in AbM's meetings, elected leadership and community representatives (Chance, 2011b; Pithouse, 2008).

AbM members hold a membership card, acquired through the payment of a small annual fee (in 2010, it was ZAR 7, around GBP 0.40). Informal settlements where more than 50 AbM members live are eligible to create an AbM branch, which requires the annual election of a committee of five members (Abahlali baseMjondolo, 2006a).[133] Branch committee members are responsible to represent their informal settlements in the Annual General Meeting (AGM). Once a year, at the AGM, AbM members elect the

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[129] See next Chapter, section 6.2.2 for further description on the importance of landline and internet, an how the lack of both influenced the increase in mobile phone use.

[130] In South Africa, there are a number of communities of Indian descendent, the majority of them living around the city of Durban.

[131] Coloured is the term used in South Africa for mix raced people, usually a mix between white and black.

[132] There is no official census of AbM members available. Information is based on observation from fieldwork, from AbM members and other external researchers who have been studying AbM.

[133] However, in a few cases, due to the lack of people involved, branch committee sometimes only have 3 or 4 elected members. In these cases, these branches would have other AbM members, outside of this community, helping out (AbM member 15, 2010).

Executive Committee – composed of the President, Vice President, Public Relations Officer, Secretary General, Treasurer, and Coordinator – the Women's League, as well as a Youth League, through a secret ballot (Chance, 2011b; Good, 2013). Only members, who hold a membership card, are eligible to vote. No elected leader or member receives a payment, except for the Secretary General, who receives a small stipend[134] to be fully dedicated to AbM office.[135]

The concept of leadership within AbM is often described as unique and representative of a bottom-up democracy (Bryant, 2005; Gibson, 2007; Patel, 2008; Pithouse, 2006c). According to an academic, the AbM model of leadership includes twenty or thirty committed leader-activists who "work hard to preserve the consultative culture of the community and of the movement" (Bryant, 2005, p.7). Another academic who has lived inside an informal settlement and participated in AbM's activities, described that:

> "Office holders are recallable, rotated, and mandated to act on specific issues at open weekly meetings. Office holders are not elected to make decisions but to ensure democratic process on matters relating to the issues" (Birkinshaw, 2009).

Committee members may or may not be perceived as leaders by AbM members. The findings of this study – described in Chapter 7 – suggest that being seen as a leader is often associated less with committee membership and more with the level of engagement within AbM and assistance provided to AbM members and residents of informal settlements.[136] This means that, a committee member who does not engage and support, will not be seen as a leader and has fewer chances of re-election.

Beyond the formal election structure and leadership model, AbM has also created democratic structures within informal settlements (*e.g.* instituting elections for

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[134] About ZAR 2,500 or around GBP 142 per month.

[135] According to Chance: "Since 2005, on occasions when funders have offered to pay salaries to elected leaders, it was discussed in meetings, and rejected on the basis that money would be corrupting of the position, and would result in potentially dangerous differentiation amongst members" (2011b, p.186)

[136] As I was able to observe, for instance, newly and engaged members, who were not elected or not a member in their respective informal settlements, can still be considered as local (or even executive) leaders.

members of local CDCs) (Bryant, 2007; Pithouse, 2006c, 2008). In almost all informal settlements in which AbM has branches, there were already local CDCs and ANC branches (Chance, 2010a). Yet, these CDCs and ANC branches had overlapping roles, including the same representatives in both organisations, These local CDCs, for instance, had questionable democratic process in place which includes no election of CDC members, and/or indication of local leadership by the ANC branch. For this reason, in many informal settlements where AbM was introduced, it became the most influential and indeed the only form of democratic political organisation for shack dwellers.

AbM's main democratic structures are maintained through opportunities for interaction and meetings, such as: community meetings, camps, and AbM general meetings (here referred to as executive meetings) (Bryant, 2007; Chance, 2011b). These meetings are generally described as opportunities for sharing of "experience that produces and develops the movement's ideas and principles" (Pithouse, 2006d, p.28).

Community (and executive) meetings are opportunities for sharing information, knowledge, opinions, and support, and discuss issues and strategies.[137] Through community meetings information is passed to members about what is happening in other informal settlements; members discuss decisions that were made at the organisational level (through executive meetings); make local decisions; have discussions on actions and activities.

Camps are overnight meetings and are not as regular as community meetings and is where all members discuss issues such as democracy, identity, or general discussions on "Abahlalism" and "living politics" (Chance, 2011b).[138]

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[137] See further analysis in Chapter 6.

[138] See description of both concepts below.

Most meetings are held on Saturdays, or in the evening during weekdays, when the majority of members are able to attend. Meetings rarely take place on Sundays, a day reserved for church, funerals, and family. Community meetings take place within the respective informal settlements, transit camps, and townships where AbM has branches.

Meetings are held where members live, and conducted in the languages that they speak. AbM has a decentralized decision making process, where decision are made on a consensual basis. Issues are discussed at length, with different positions expressed, in order to achieve a consensus. Where consensus is not reached, the matter is put to a vote (Pithouse, 2008).[139] AbM's organisational structure reduces its dependence on individual leaders, and thus increases the resilience of the organisation (Gibson, 2008).

Until the Kennedy attacks, all of AbM executive meetings, with rare exceptions, would take place within Kennedy community hall. After the attacks, executive meetings took place within informal settlements, and at the AbM office in Durban.[140]

AbM also holds external meetings aimed at negotiating or building support, which can include meetings with the police, government officials, NGOs, church leaders, lawyers, academics, and journalists (Chance, 2011b).

AbM has other kinds of organisational structures, including "task teams". Task teams are groups of elected members who "work on a particular short-term project with a narrowly defined mandate, such as formulating a response to a piece of legislation, or making administrative arrangements for a street protest" (Chance, 2011b, p.191).

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[139] On reflecting on his experience with AbM and their decision-making process, Pithouse explains that: "There is no other way to build and sustain popular consent for a risky political project among a hugely diverse group of vulnerable people with profound experiences of marginalisation and exploitation in multiple spheres of life, including political projects waged in their name" (2008, p.79).

[140] Kennedy community hall could accommodate up to three thousand people while AbM current office in Durban only holds up to 50 people.

Finally, a large number of AbM members are supporters of the ANC (Chance, 2011b; Sinwell, 2010). Yet, AbM has managed to keep itself independent of political parties and the state (Bryant, 2007; Huchzermeyer, 2009; Patel, 2011; Pithouse, 2006c). AbM has endeavoured keep its independence from anyone and any organisation which would decide or speak on its behalf.

5.1.3 AbM's organisational political voice

The historical-cultural configuration of marginalisation of AbM members is largely rooted in the apartheid system of South Africa.[141] Bryant (2007) perceived AbM as actively promoting itself as a continuation of the struggle against apartheid. The majority of AbM members have experienced, or witnessed, some kind of state violence during the apartheid regime (Chance, 2011b), The experience of oppression under the apartheid regime has influenced AbM's political voice. This has been discussed in greater detail in the section on AbM's development and expression of its political voice (section 6.6)

The basis of AbM's political voice comes from its concept of *living politics* and Abahlalism[142]. Living politics is the basis of AbM's philosophy. As a grassroots organisation, AbM stands for an inclusionary politics of the poor. This means a politics made and conducted by the poor, which enables the poor to participate in the decision-making process which affect their lives. In the words of an AbM leader, S'bu Zikode explains that:

[141] The effect of the apartheid regime came up in discussions of the Living Learning booklet, where it was treated through a metaphor: "Someone in the group told the story of a pig that had been kept in a cage. Then one day, the pig was released from the cage and tied to a tree instead. And the pig celebrated, saying, 'I am free now'. We all laughed about this story – and then our story-teller added: 'But you know, even if you cut that rope, the pig will still just circle around the tree and not move away.' We realised that this is what apartheid has done to us" (Figlan *et al.*, 2009, p.28).

[142] For more information see appendix 7 "Draft of Abahlalism Manifesto". This thesis does not analyse Abahlalism, however it uses some of the discussions observed during fieldwork and writings on Abahlalism to support analysis of individual reflection.

> "Our politics is a traditional home politics which is understood very well by all the old mamas and *gogos* [grannies] because it affects their lives and gives them a home" (S'bu Zikode speech cited in Gibson, 2007, p.77).
>
> "Our living politic begins with the fact that all of us were created in the image of God and are therefore equal. Our living politic starts by recognising the full and equal humanity of every human being. We struggle as human beings with equal worth and intelligence to all other human beings against a system that produces inequality by denying, everyday, the humanity of some of us" (Zikode, 2010b)

Through reflecting on a living politics, AbM members developed what it calls *Abahlalism*. Abahlalism (or "shackness") refers to the process of reflection upon their own reality. Abahlalism encapsulates AbM members' right to conceptualize a collective self-identification as "the poor" (Chance, 2011b). Abahlalism stands for what Phillips (2003) describes as rejecting the definition (by others) of what they are and how they ought to live. Abahlalism is "grounded in self-sufficiency based on the strength and solidarity that come[s] from collectively standing up for oneself" (Gibson, 2008, p.706).[143]

For AbM, living politics and Abahlalism are a practise of politics that comes from the real needs of the people, and it is owned and shaped by the people (Figlan *et al.*, 2009). AbM sees itself as a space where people develop their living politics, a space where everyone is respected and where people speak openly (Pithouse, 2008). Some discussions on living politics include references to scholars such as philosophers Franz Fanon and Paulo Freire, especially reflections about the "oppressed" and an "oppressive condition" (Cooper-Knock, 2008; Figlan *et al.*, 2009; Gibson, 2011a; Zikode, 2011).

Living politics and Abahlalism are exercised through deliberations in meetings, marches, and other everyday practices and activities within AbM's structure and informal settlements, such as occupation of land and illegal connection to utilities (Chance, 2011b). It is grounded in AbM's organisational political voice and, most

[143] Although the definitions here provided come from academics articles, I was able to observe these concepts being discussed by AbM members during meetings, marches and community visits. On Chapter 6, I provide further analysis on how these concepts and visions were introduced and developed within AbM.

prominently, through its determination to enable shack dwellers to speak for themselves (Gibson, 2008).

In a public address at an American university, AbM's president at the time, S'bu Zikode, explained the process of thinking and developing their living politics is a complex one. According to him, living politics is:

> "not buil[t] in one day, it is built in prayer, humility, sacrifice and courage. Our struggle is a class struggle, it is a struggle of the poor, those living in the shacks, selling on the streets, doing domestic and secretary works" (Zikode, 2010a).

Despite criticism and attempts to discredit the organisation and its struggle (Zikode, 2009), AbM has often declared that, although they are poor in possessions, they are not poor in mind (Cooper-Knock, 2008). Under the banner of "University of Abahlali baseMjondolo", for example, AbM has stated that shack dwellers are capable of thinking about their own struggle, and creating their own knowledge and voice (Bryant, 2007; Gibson, 2007; Selmeczi, 2012; Zikode, 2008).[144]

Since the Kennedy road blockade, AbM went from demanding services and rights to more actively engaging in political processes by speaking out against corruption, opposing public policies which negatively affect their lives, and demanding the right to co-determine their future (Pithouse, 2006c). AbM has defied political parties and government officials, by officially maintaining an election boycott position (Abahlali baseMjondolo, 2006c; Chance, 2011b).[145] AbM has supported individuals and groups of residents of informal settlements by legally challenging, for example: illegal evictions, removal to transit camps, and plans that undermine shack dwellers' rights.

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[144] According to Patel: "There is no building for this university. And if the students of this university are created through events, they are educated through the place of learning – the meeting. The meeting is the classroom…" (2008, p.108),

[145] Yet, in 2014, AbM has controversially decided to support the Democratic Alliance (DA) party as a strategy, according to AbM, to weaken the ANC repressive power (Abahlali baseMjondolo, 2014; Brown, 2014; Tshabalala, 2014).

A prominent example is the challenge against the "Prevention and Elimination of Reemergence of Slums Act"[146], also known as the Slums Act. The Act, essentially, focused on slum eradication, through the use of repressive urban planning practices (Buccus, 2009); and without necessarily guaranteeing the provision of new houses within the city (Chance, 2011b). In May 2009, after exhausting all legal alternatives to oppose the KwaZulu Natal's slum eradication legislation, AbM went to challenge the Slums Act at the Constitutional Court (Abahlali baseMjondolo, 2009a).[147]

AbM had the support of a number of academics, and other social movements. Most important was the support provided by the Centre for Applied Legal Studies (CALS), and the Socio-Economic Rights Institute (SERI) for the Constitutional Court case. AbM received a number of solidarity statements and media attention, as well as declarations from prominent figures, such as Miloon Kothari, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Housing, condemning the "Slums Act" (Huchzermeyer, 2011). In October 2009, two weeks after the Kennedy attacks, the Constitutional Court declared section 16 of the Slums Act as unconstitutional and invalid.[148] In essence, "without section 16, the Slums Act is rendered ineffective" (Centre for Applied Legal Studies (CALS), 2009). AbM considered the ruling a great victory for the organisation, the movement, and shack dwellers across the country. In particular, the victory against the Slums Act halted and created legal constraints for much of the eviction and "beautification" plans by government ahead of the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa (Ngonyama, 2009).

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[146] The *Slums Act* was a piece of legislation enacted by the KZN government and used as a model for other provinces in South Africa.

[147] For a complete analysis on the context and procedures taken by AbM, see Huchzermeyer (2011).

[148] According to CALS, Section 16 of the Slums Act made "compulsory for municipalities to institute proceedings for eviction of unlawful occupiers where the owner or person in charge of the land fails to do so within the time prescribed by the MEC. The applicants argued that section 16 of the Slums Act is in violation of section 26(2) of the Constitution in three ways: it precludes meaningful engagement between municipalities and unlawful occupiers; it violates the principle that evictions should be a measure of last resort; and it undermines the precarious tenure of unlawful occupiers by allowing the institution of eviction proceedings while ignoring the procedural safeguards inherent in the PIE Act" (Centre for Applied Legal Studies (CALS), 2009).

Yet, AbM is still, at the time of writing (December 2014), fighting illegal evictions and violence against informal settlement residents, even with official court orders blocking such actions by the state.

5.1.4 Media and ICTs within AbM

Before collecting data for this research, there were a number of indications of the role of ICTs for expressing AbM's political voice. Some AbM members, for instance, had access to internet tools such as email and chat. Yet, there was no information available regarding frequency and accessibility of these tools. AbM had a frequently updated website with a database of externally published material about the organisation, as well as the history and statements made by AbM itself.[149]

AbM has developed the similar tactics as other social movement and grassroots organisations in South Africa, and used its website to bypass the critical and often inaccessible traditional TV and newspaper channels (Willems, 2010). AbM's website, has helped to publicize their cause inside and outside South Africa. More recently, AbM's website was praised as "an impressive and extensive undertaking" especially coming from a shack dwellers movement (Scott, 2010, p.6).[150]

However, more critical voices claimed that, while the website has publicised AbM to academics, activists, and "the left" in South Africa and abroad, it has done little to actually mobilise and strengthen members of the organisation (Sinwell, 2010). Such criticism is not surprising and mirrors similar concerns about the use of the internet by other social movements in South Africa.[151]

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[149] For a full discussion of AbM's website, including the importance of the use of this media challenges as well as opportunities for AbM members, see next Chapter, section 6.2.1.3.

[150] The information about when the website started, who created and developed, and where did the skills come from, is described in Chapter 6, section 6.2.1.3.

[151] For more details see Chapter 4, section 4.1.3.

AbM itself has stated, although they "like this technology", there are concerns that "the rich have access to these technologies – producing, selling and using them and so they are most often used against [them]" (Abahlali baseMjondolo, 2007).

Mobile phones with basic features such as call and SMS were ubiquitous among AbM members at the time of fieldwork. AbM used mobile phones to organise and mobilise support for their activities (Willems, 2010), similar to other social movements in South Africa (Chiumbu, 2012). Among the few articles[152] available on AbM's website, mobile phones were described as an important tool to support AbM's struggle (Abahlali baseMjondolo, 2007). Nonetheless, similar to the internet, there is little information available regarding the frequency and purpose of mobile phone use.

The case of AbM, as well as the example of other social movements, illustrates that there is limited understanding of who, what and under which circumstances technology is being used in these contexts. Without this information, it is not possible to understand whether ICTs use is, for example, influenced by complex issues such as power relations (Cleaver, 2001; Devas and Grant, 2003; Goetz and Gaventa, 2001; Guijt and Shah, 1998) and self-representation (de Wit and Berner, 2009; Mitlin and Bebbington, 2006) influence the development of a political voice among marginalised individuals.

AbM defines itself as independent, where shack dwellers are able to "think and speak for themselves". AbM reinforces this through their motto: "Talk to Us, Not For Us". In the turbulent environment in which AbM operates, this can be seen as progressive and important for the development of a political voice of its shack dwellers' members. Yet, a democratic and progressive structure does not mean that all members have a political voice.

[152] Here I refer to all written material available on AbM's website.

6. Data description

Introduction

This Chapter presents the case study of Abahlali baseMjondolo (AbM). The focus is on the factors that influence the process of developing a political voice and the role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in this process. This Chapter describes and orders the data identified during fieldwork following the categories of the framework discussed in Chapter 2 (section 2.5).

The first section, 6.1 Personal Experiences and Background (PEB), presents data on the background of individual AbM members, related their political engagement prior to joining AbM. It includes a section on what kind of ICTs were available and for what kind of purposes they were used before joining AbM.

Section 6.2, Social Context, focuses on describing what has changed since individual members joined AbM. It includes the development of social bonds between individuals and within the organisation and growth of the organisation. Communication processes, either face-to-face interaction, or mediated through ICTs are an important aspect of this section. The section also provides data to gain an insight in to how, or whether, these communication processes have an influence on individual political voices.

Section 6.3, Resources, gives an overview of the experiences, skills, and capabilities acquired by AbM members, as a result of their engagement with AbM. This section explains how these experiences, skills, and capabilities have supported their engagement with ICTs, and the development of personal traits which play a role in the development of political voice.

Section 6.4, Sense of Agency, describes which factors influence individual motivations into lead on, or taking part in, AbM related activities. Moreover, this section explores how these factors motivate individuals to express their political voice.

Section 6.5, Reflection, looks at to how reflection influences the process of developing a political voice. It focuses on how some of factors described in the other sections are interacting with individual reflection, reflective dialogue, and views on both internet and mobile phones.

Section 6.6, Action: Political Voice, looks at examples of individual and organisational voice, and the different channels through which they are expressed. It looks at how the political voice of the organisation affected individual members, and vice versa, as well as, how the act of expressing political voice feeds back into the process of developing a political voice.

All quotes included in this Chapter, are *verbatim*, and have only been corrected for minor grammar mistakes when it did not alter the meaning, and to give greater clarity.

6.1 Personal Experiences and Background (PEB)

The historical and cultural background of individuals and groups provides a starting point to study the reasons for individuals' lack of voice (Freire, 1970; Watts, unpublished; Watts and Guessous, 2006). Specific factors which might have influenced motivations to join or create AbM are presented here in the light of the literature on the historical-cultural configuration of informal settlements in South Africa (see Chapter 4). It includes information on membership and participation in groups or organisations before joining AbM – *e.g.* church, youth organisations, political parties, or other social movements and grassroots organisations. The objective was to establish a "starting point" for the analysis, and identify aspects that may have influenced the process of developing a political voice, prior to involvement with AbM.[153]

[153] For example, within the PEB factor, the first signs of sense of agency were identified – discussed later in this Chapter.

6.1.1 Politics, gender, religion, and migration

As described in Chapter 3, 30 AbM members were interviewed, of whom 13 were women and 17 men. Among the interviewees, 60% (18 respondents) were isiZulu native speakers and 23% and 17%, isiXhosa and English native speakers respectively (7 and 5 respondents). Of these, only 20% (6 respondents) were unable to speak English. The vast majority were Christians, 80% (24 respondents). About 10% (3 respondents) claimed not to have a religion, 7% (2 respondents) and 3% (1 respondent), were Hindu and Muslin respectively.

The age of respondents varies: 47% (14 respondents) were 40 years or older; 37% (11 respondents) were between 26 and 40 years old; and 16% (respondents) were between 18 and 25 years old at the time of data collection. Of these, 70% (21 respondents) had not completed school – and reached between grade 8 and 12 –, 20% (6 respondents) completed school and 10% (3 respondents) have attended or were attending a university at undergraduate degree level.

The AbM members interviewed, 80% (24 respondents) had come from rural areas, and 20% (6 respondents) from peri-urban sites. Some members started moving into their current locations (mainly peri-urban) – or roughly the same area – during the 1980's, when mobility was limited due to policies of the Apartheid regime. The majority of interviewees moved during the 1990's, after the end of apartheid.[154]

Similar to what was described in Chapter 4, some of the reasons given for migration included pursuing further school education (*e.g.* high school, university degree), or looking for job opportunities. All interviewees chose their particular communities based on either: existing family and/or friends' links; proximity to job opportunities; or affordability of shack – or plot to construct a shack.

[154] See Chapter 4 for further description on the transition period and migration to urban centres.

Four interviewees described some conflict caused by ethnic divisions in their respective rural areas as a reason to leave the rural areas. According to these members, conflict among people from Zulu and Xhosa ethnic groups, led to closure of schools, violence, and the migration of families to Durban informal settlements. Although less discussed by interviewees, ethnic divisions were also present in the informal settlements (see further discussion in section 6.2.1.1).

A common theme that emerged from the interviews was the importance of religion. Data suggests that all Christian interviewees (80% of respondents) attended church on a regular basis. Even though many of them were not engaged in church activities (*e.g.* bible reading groups; organising church events; fundraising), attending church services was reported as an important part of their lives.[155]

A gender difference was apparent in terms of involvement in organisations before migrating to urban and peri-urban informal settlements. On one hand, none of the women interviewed had been involved in organisations in their native rural areas. And once they migrated to their current informal settlements (urban and peri urban) only three women had joined local African National Congress (ANC) branches. However, they were not politically engaged in ANC activities.

On the other hand, men seemed to have been more politically engaged. For instance, all (except one[156]) of the male interviewees older than 40 years old (6 respondents) described their involvement in anti-apartheid movements, in particular in – what would later become – the ANC. Three of these six, for instance, described having been briefly involved in the anti-apartheid movement, mainly by attending meetings of ANC in rural areas and marches. All three were regular members of the ANC and yet were not involved in organising or leading any activity for the ANC. Notably, links with the

[155] Faith does play an important role within AbM and is further described in section 6.2.1.5 under "Singing and Praying".

[156] This one male member was of Indian descent.

ANC among interviewees who moved to urban and peri-urban areas were common, mostly motivated by the new reality of living in informal settlements.[157]

The majority of male interviewees, between 26 and 40 years old, described that they had been involved in organisations prior to moving to urban areas. Some of these members stated that they were involved in some sort of group activity or organisation while living in the rural areas. These included involvement in youth organisations, such as the boy scouts or Congress of South African Students (COSAS), or became, in their words, "activists" through school and church programmes.[158]

None of the youth respondents (between 18 and 25 years old), including both women and men, were involved in any organisation or political activity prior to joining AbM.[159]

6.1.2 Informal settlements: social dimensions

Motivations behind political engagement within informal settlements were often associated with the conditions of these places. For instance, ten respondents – mostly men – stated that their involvement in local political parties – mostly the ANC[160] – and/or joining of local community-based committees (CDCs) was motivated by the

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[157] See next subheading for interviewees' description of 'new reality'.

[158] As two members explained: "Since the primary level I was involved with the Boys Scouts" (AbM member 12, 2010); "And also at school I was a chairperson of 'Student Representative Council. At school I was also a chairperson of COSAS [Congress of South African Students]. Lot of things" (AbM member 3, 2010). Another member described that before joining AbM and the Rural Network (see Chapter 5), he used to work for a local church, and that he was campaigning for development in rural areas. He became an activist through debates in school about development of rural areas. Around 1988, he formed a youth organisation, ZYC ("Helping yourself"), which was active in organising activities for the youth, such as sports and poetry. Because of his leadership in the organisation of activities, at the age of 28, he was arrested. According to him, the apartheid government accused him of being a terrorist. He was detained for a month, and after his release, he joined the church. Through his work as a reverend with the church he became involved in setting-up the Rural Network, in 2006. Through the Rural Network he has been working with HIV/AIDS education, helping people to fight evictions in farms and rural areas, and supporting people to go to court and challenge evictions (AbM member 30, 2010).

[159] Seven out of thirty interviewees.

[160] In spite of the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) being more prominent in the Kwazulu-Natal state, most informal settlements studied in this research have strong links with ANC, and community committees were – often – linked to the ANC local branch.

"inhumane" and "disgusting" living conditions, which in many cases were inferior to those of their rural homes they had left behind.[161]

These members further stated that they had been involved in CDCs, either independent committees, or those that were formed by the ANC within informal settlements. One member, described why he joined the Kennedy Road Development Committee (KRDC):

> "I joined to support the community and also because the community members encourage me into it" (AbM member 25, 2010).

Of the ten respondents, six joined activities almost immediately or shortly after they arrived in the informal settlements, and all but one (who was too young at the time), reached a position of leadership within local CDCs. For younger members, early engagement with such kind of organisations seemed to have influenced their future role as leaders within AbM. A young member described his involvement with a local CDC after moving from the rural area, as follows:

> "Later I became a community member in Pemary Ridge. I was 18 years old. I grew up with the community and I always been with the community. I became the vice chairperson in 2002 to 2004" (AbM member 7, 2010).

Interviews revealed that political party membership was an important aspect in their background. In particular ANC membership was perceived by interviewees as way to

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[161] A young member from Kennedy described that when she first arrived at an informal settlement, to live with her aunt, she was so shocked that she asked her aunt: "Are we staying here?!" She describes the one bedroom shack as "everything in one space", and she was very scared of the place and everything around it. This was a very different reality from her place in the rural area. In the beginning she could not bear to spend weekends in the settlement, and she would stay with friends. After a few months, she got used to the conditions in the settlement (AbM member 27, 2010).

Another member described that when she moved to Kennedy, she looked in disbelief. She was coming from a place where she lived in a house, with electricity, running water, and even had her own bedroom. She asked herself: "how could people life in such conditions?" She said that she had an option to rent a flat in town, but she thought it was too isolated. She described that, even though she didn't like the conditions in Kennedy, she felt welcome there, and thought that people were relating to each other. "Despite their living conditions they have this sense of humanity within them. If other people can stay here, even myself, I can stay here" (AbM member 15, 2010).

get involved in the development and improvement of their respective communities. One member described the following:

> "when I was growing up, in my area, the only popular organisation that existed was the ANC, and when I came to Durban it was also the ANC. I was joining because in my hometown the only party that was popular and praised was the ANC. In the 1980's and 1990's there was a war between ANC and IFP, and the outcome of it, in people's mentality is that ANC is the only good party. When I moved to Durban, I felt that most people around me were involved with ANC, so it was a natural path for me to follow" (AbM member 15, 2010).

However, interviewees involved in party politics or with CDCs were dissatisfied with the rigid, bureaucratic, unresponsive structure of political parties and government bodies. Some described their discontent after prolonged periods of unfulfilled promises from ANC officials.[162] These interviewees, who joined or were involved in the creation of AbM since 2005, described their discontent with their circumstances and lack of responsiveness of public institutions as follows:

> "I decided to join Abahlali motivated by the conditions we were living there, we didn't have light, water. The local councillor came and made a lot of promises but then disappeared for a long time, he appeared only on election time" (AbM member 22, 2010).
>
> "We struggled to negotiate with the local councillor for more toilets and taps. The councillors kept saying, it will be done in 2 weeks, and nothing happened – and it was empty promise after empty promise. We started to get upset, and realized we couldn't trust the councillor" (AbM member 18, 2010).

Other members recognized the importance of ANC in the past, but they had a more pragmatic view about how the party political structure worked. They often described realizing that they had been manipulated and had no voice within political parties structures:

> "I decided to leave the ANC, not because I hate the ANC, just because I think the ANC came to do good, but the people… you see, if you are riding a bus, if you are inside the bus, and you notice that the bus is not going straight. You must not think

[162] As an interviewee described: "I am not a member of ANC anymore, cause they don't help us anyway, I don't trust them" (AbM member 10, 2010).

> that the problem is with the bus. It means that the problem is with the driver. I noticed that – with the text and the writing – with the ANC" (AbM member 3, 2010).

Dominance and manipulation have also been acknowledged by a few members:

> "I learned a lot within [the ANC], what it means understanding the party politics. And it helped me differentiate from what I call today living politics and party politics. Very practical distinction with the top-down approach, who sets the agenda. […] There, the Mayor and the structure tells the agenda, not the community. They do that to secure their future" (AbM member 12, 2010).

> "When we were in the ANC, we were just puppets there, because we were just told by the councillor what was going to happen, there was no vibrant… a debate about how things should be done, and so and so. It was the national executive decision brought to the province; comrades should do this, attend to that rally. Not even part of organising it, we just appreciated we were invited and we were going to be provided a free bus. And then you go to the rally, sit down there and go home" (AbM member 20, 2010).

Frustration with government, party politics, and the lack of tangible results from engagement with the ANC, appeared to be the driving reasons for some members' activism. Moreover, a few of the members interviewed would invariably describe the realization of the need to step forward and do something to improve their condition. This sentiment was evident during discussions in AbM meetings (AbM executive meeting at AbM's office, 2010)

However, other members did not demonstrate the same kind of questioning and understanding about party politics and patronage kind of relationships. These members described particular circumstances and overall dissatisfaction, which made them seek help. Particular circumstances for engagement varied, and included: being threatened with eviction by local 'chiefs' and landlords; problems with corruption; being either forcefully transferred to transit camps or moved there following empty (even deceitful) promises (AbM member 6, 2010; AbM member 8, 2010; AbM member

16, 2010; AbM member 17, 2010; Introductory Community Visit at Ridge View transit camp, 2010).[163]

When inquired about what kind of action they took before seeking the help of AbM – or finding out about AbM – some described that they asked for help from local church organisations, ANC local branches, and the police. These attempts were not only unsuccessful, and they perceived that they could not count on assistance from these institutions:

> "We joined because they [AbM] were the only people that really helped us, you know we were going through this problem, we tried so many other places, we tried going to ANC offices, we tried everything. We went to legal aid, we went to complain to ANC office, but they didn't help us. Then we heard about Abahlali, and then we joined, and they helped us a lot" (AbM member 8, 2010).
>
> "I was threatened before, when my husband was in prison. At that time, I was not part of Abahlali. I was in great fear, and I lived in fear. I didn't call the police because they were on the side of the chief. I don't trust the police" (AbM member 6, 2010).[164]

Among these members, some talked about not knowing what to do and who to reach for help. These members stated that before AbM came to their communities, they did not know about their rights.[165] According to these members, AbM has supported them, brought "the knowledge of rights" and "helped [them] find [their] voices" (AbM member 5, 2010; AbM member 6, 2010; AbM member 9, 2010).

Responses from interviews thus suggest different experiences and reasons, which led members to create or join AbM. For some members, joining AbM was a practical decision based on problems and hardship encountered in their daily lives, and not necessarily a realization and understanding about dominance and exploitation. Other members, however, demonstrated having an understanding of the root of injustice

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[163] A common example is that of shack dwellers who had their allocated Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) houses, given, or sold to, other families. See Chapter 4

[164] By chief she refers to a local landlord who has been trying to evict shack dwellers from the area.

[165] These interviewees described being unaware of laws and rights that protected them, for example, that the police could not evict them without a court order, and without providing them a place to stay.

and about how shack dwellers are often affected by party politics and the violation of their rights.

6.1.3 Use of ICTs prior to AbM

Data on the availability, usage and views of both the internet and mobile phones, among AbM members, prior to their engagement with the organisation, are described next. This data provided a basis to understand whether availability and use of these technologies has changed; how it changed, and under which circumstances that change took place.

6.1.3.1 Mobile phones

In the case of AbM, mobile phones were the only kind of ICT that was ubiquitously available for all interviewees before becoming members of AbM. Although a few interviewees have had access to computers and the internet before AbM, mobile phones were by far the most ubiquitous communication technology within AbM's informal settlements.

All interviewees had had mobile phones for a few years before joining AbM, and all but two interviewees only used the "pay as you go" system (sometimes referred to as pre-paid) as opposed to having a contract with a network provider. Interviewees described that they often bought second-hand phones, and replaced a phone once it was lost, stolen, or broken. Most female interviewees received their mobile phones from family members or friends. This was less the case among male interviewees who often bought new phones in instalments, or waited until they had money to upgrade an old model– but in most cases they stated having never spent much time without a phone.[166]

[166] Interestingly, although interviewees were not able to specifically tell me the rough dates – month or year – they acquired each phone, most of them were able to tell me the brand and model of most of

Only a few exceptions, all among younger interviewees, had paid a large amount in instalments for new and top range phones. Most interviewees owned cheap phones with basic features (voice call and SMS functionality only, as opposed to, for instance, Smartphones). At the time data was collected, only two AbM interviewees owned a Smartphone (Blackberry), and had limited internet connection through the device.[167]

Because of high mobile phone's airtime tariffs, interviewees stated that they had been unable to make important calls on a regular basis, or had to save airtime credit for emergency situations.[168] The vast majority of interviewees stated that before their engagement with AbM, they spent their airtime on family and friends – and in some rare cases, business contacts.

However, for some interviewees who had been involved in local CDCs, personal mobile phones were sometimes used for community related issues. For instance, these members would be asked by residents to call the police or medical help (ambulance) on their behalf, to solve situations related to community dispute, domestic violence, or shack fires.

Two of the interviewees described using their phone to communicate with government officials and engaging with the municipality as a result of their role in local CDCs. Usually, communication regarding problems with service provision (*e.g.* limited number of public toilets for residents, housing programmes and informal settlement upgrading) (AbM member 7, 2010; AbM member 12, 2010).

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their past phones – and they always knew the brand and model from their first phone – describing it as a very important event in their lives.

[167] More recently, some AbM leaders have been acquiring smartphones (mostly Blackberries) and due to a decrease in prices of internet connection, have been able to communicate via mobile internet tools.

[168] Unemployed women interviewees, for instance, tended to be more dependent on family members to buy them airtime, whereas unemployed male interviewees never mentioned being dependent on family members to buy them airtime, and described that either AbM or the community contribute to the airtime that would be spent with AbM related activities.

The vast majority of interviewees – the few exceptions being among the youth – have solely used voice call features, and did not know how to use SMS.[169] Although some services like please call me (PCM) SMS were available to them – for free – many members would not take advantage of it.[170] After joining AbM, some interviewees started to use SMS, and have changed their views about its usefulness.

6.1.3.2 Computers and internet

Computers and internet were unavailable for the majority of interviewees before joining AbM. Apart from four interviewees, who had learned some basic computer skills at work or college, such as basic word processing (AbM member 12, 2010; AbM member 15, 2010; AbM member 19, 2010; AbM member 29, 2010) – but not the internet – the vast majority have never touched a computer, let alone accessed the internet.

A number of members described that computers and the internet were not part of their reality, and that they felt that they are unable to learn how to use them.. One member, for instance, explained that he used to think that computers were for "men in suits", someone who is well-educated (AbM member 7, 2010). Another member presented a similar view by saying that:

> "for the majority of the members, it doesn't cross their mind to even touch a computer. For them, computers is for highly educated people" (AbM member 15, 2010).

Overall, the general perception was that computers were beyond their ability, their need, and social status. For the majority of AbM members, this perception has not changed since they joined the organisation. However, for a few members who were able to learn and access the technology through their engagement with AbM – as described next, in this Chapter – they came to realize that they were able to use and take advantage of this technology to support AbM and their work within it.

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[169] The only other tool used by the youth was Mxit. See appendix 8.

[170] See Chapter 4, section 4.1.3.

6.2 Social context

Data collected on the social context focused on the collective processes which occur as a result of individuals joining and engaging with AbM. These include, for instance, events, interactions, and the social environment.

Collective processes consist of communication processes, including opportunities and frequency of interactions, sharing and respecting views, feelings and emotions (Lawler and Thye, 1999; Lucio-Villegas, 2009). Data described below looks at the communication processes that occur either face-to-face or mediated through ICTs – *i.e.* mobile phones and the internet. Emphasis is placed on the content, that is the meaning and information which is exchanged (Castells, 2009; Coyne and Parker, 2006), as well as bonds, relationships, interactions, and transactions (van Dijk, 2005) between members and non-members of AbM.

The description differentiates between two levels of engagement by AbM members: local and organisational. The local level relates to communication processes that occur within and regarding issues related to members' respective communities (informal settlements). For instance, requesting AbM support to prevent evictions affecting that particular informal settlement; organising a community meeting, and etc. Local level communication processes are mostly based on face-to-face exchanges.

The organisational level relates to communication processes, and issues, that go beyond a particular informal settlement. It includes, for instance, AbM's organisational structure, activities, issues affecting different informal settlements, media, and supporters. Members, who engage in communication process at the organisational level, might make use of both face-to-face and some ICT mediated channels (see below).

6.2.1 Self-organisation 'versus' collaboration

Self-organisation and collaboration emerged from data as important for collective processes inside AbM. Data collected gives an insight into how self-organisation and collaborations emerged and evolved; not just among AbM members, but also with their external supporters. This is described next.

6.2.1.1 Self-organisation and inclusion

Social and economic divisions were observed within informal settlements where AbM is present. Interviewees were often vague about the subject, but different ethnic, racial, and language backgrounds were sources of friction as observed at meetings and during discussions about 'community' life. Within some informal settlements, subdivisions based on race were causes of disputes among residents. Indian descendants and black shack dwellers in Motala Heights, for instance, seemed to have only got to know each other after they joined AbM.[171]

This was particular evident among new members' narratives about tensions between residents from different backgrounds. These new members used specific, and at times derogatory, language while referring to other residents– *e.g.* "that Mpondo[172] is causing a lot of trouble" (Community meeting at Annet Drive informal settlement, 2010). While, this kind of language and way of referring to other people was often reprehended within meetings, by more experienced members, AbM seems to have often struggled with these divisions.

AbM has, since its formation, attempted to bring together shack-dwellers of all ethnicities and different informal settlements and ethnicities. The leadership of AbM, for instance, included shack dwellers from Zulu, Xhosa, and Indian ethnicities.

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[171] Although residents of difference racial background have lived in the same area for decades, there is little indication of social relations among them before AbM.

[172] Mpondo or AmaMpondo is a term generally, and incorrectly, used by isiZulu speakers to refer to isiXhosa speakers. It is often used in a derogatory way. Mpondo is the name of a group of isiXhosa-speaking people originally from the Eastern province.

However, this was not an easy task. A number of interviewees described that many individuals involved in the creation of AbM expressed suspicion towards shack dwellers from informal settlements or ethnicities other than their own. As one supporter described:

> "[T]he most difficult thing in the beginning was to make sure that all the communities felt that they shared the movement equally. There was this constant fear that, the movement is really about Kennedy, or is really about Foreman [road informal settlement]. Like these communities were using the movement to get things for themselves" (AbM supporter 1, 2010).

One member illustrated this suspicion through an anecdote about how the name *Abahlali* was chosen. According to this member, after the first road blockade in Kennedy, people from other informal settlements, expressed the wish to "join the action". This evolved into a few other marches, "hosted" by different settlements. However, some people who were not from these settlements felt that they were not being represented (AbM member 12, 2010).

These marches often printed t-shirts with the name of the hosting community (*e.g.* Foreman Road march). According to this member, people started to question: "Why should I support and use a t-shirt saying Kennedy Road, if I'm not from there? People could feel deceived." According to him, this is how the name *Abahlali* emerged, as he illustrated:

> "There was a particular meeting where there was a lot of discussion about what to write in the t-shirt for the next march. At some point, [AbM member 7] said: 'But we are all abahlali; we are all living in the shacks'. This is where the [AbM] movement was born, after the debate on what to write on the t-shirt" (AbM member 12, 2010).

For some members, issues such as the one described above, raised the importance of inclusion, to create a sense of "togetherness". These members claimed that it was important to AbM to integrate different communities; in a way that people felt that this was also "[their] struggle". Interviewees described these aspects as important to develop trust and camaraderie. One supporter described this approach as he experienced:

> "So, it is not just a vertical relation born in trust, probably more – actually – horizontal relation. And that takes a lot of being together, a lot of staying up all night in camps, singing, talking ..." (AbM supporter 1, 2010).

According to many interviewees, as well as observations gathered at meetings and discussions, the leadership of AbM has attempted to promote inclusiveness inside the organisation. This inclusiveness and togetherness is mostly observed from data on face-to-face interactions (see section 6.2.1.5), and creation of bonds (section 6.4.1).

Gender

AbM does not keep reliable statistics on the gender split of membership. However, from my own observation of meetings and events, AbM members seem to be largely women. This trend is also reflected in the elected leadership and community committees' representative of AbM.

Women were often the majority in AbM meetings. Through participant observation, there was no clear indication of gender differences regarding, for instance, participation, abilities and motivation to speak in meetings, questioning proposals and decisions, arguments, and leading activities.

Breaking the data down by gender and looking at the female perspective, women described similar views to men associated with social bonds and solidarity (see section 6.4.1), and were equally engaged in political activity. For instance, some female members spoke about how they feel included in AbM's activities, and they were encouraged to speak in meetings or lead actions in the organisation.

Other female members perceived no gender difference. For them, AbM belongs to them, equally, as it belongs to men.

> "The way I look at it, women actually stand a very big power in Abahlali, because I've seen a lot of woman stand up and work in Abahlali and I think is actually making them more powerful, more strong" (AbM member 1, 2010).

Male AbM members often described that women – and youth – have the same power as men, and the movement would not have achieved its current position, if it were not for the engagement of women and some youth.[173] A male member, for instance, described that: "because we do believe in gender equality. Women have the same rights, there is no men power" (AbM member 19, 2010).[174]

6.2.1.2 Collaborations with external supporters

As described in the previous Chapter, AbM has been, from early on, accused of being manipulated by agitators trying to vilify the ANC government. In newspaper articles and speeches, government officials referred to AbM as a "third force" and accused it of not being a truly representative of shack dwellers (Bryant, 2007; Chance, 2011b; Pithouse, 2006b).[175]

AbM's close links with some external supporters, mostly academics and representatives of NGOs, led to some criticism and claims that AbM members were being manipulated by these individuals and groups (Walsh, 2008). Interestingly, this assumption stands is in contrast to the initial resistance that academics and NGOs experienced when trying to develop links with AbM.[176]

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[173] Almost all non-youth interviewees and a few youth interviewees described they were struggling to get the youth from informal settlements to be involved, and they believed they were important because "they are the future of the movement". Some of the reasons for the lack of engagement of the youth, described by AbM members, were that they were too busy with their own personal issues, or social networking; individualism, and not understanding the potential of joining a social movement to achieve things collectively. This research, however, did not study the reasons behind youth non-engagement with AbM.

[174] Since its creation, AbM have pushed for equality in a male dominant society. I have not studied in depth the specific development of gender equality within AbM – neither, I believed, is it shared by all male members. However, the incentive to create groups within AbM, such as the AbM Women's League, created the on the 09 August 2008 (Abahlali baseMjondolo Women's League, 2012), might have helped to strengthen women's position within AbM.

[175] See Chapter 5, section 5.1.3.

[176] Curiously, claims and criticisms of this nature often originated from government officials, academics and NGOs which AbM chose not to work with. Further analysis including my findings on these claims of manipulation, is presented in section 6.4 and 6.5.

Individuals involved in the creation of AbM expressed suspicion towards external supporters – especially white people.[177] One member described the mood at the time:

> "At the beginning, when [AbM supporter 1] got involved, and he was very kind in offering help, he was also accused of being a spy. People had resentment to 'external/white' and there was a lot of pressure – with the arrested kids[178] – and the mood was not good" (AbM member 12, 2010).

The lack of trust towards external supporters seemed to have been a general feature of relationships between shack dwellers and "external" people. An academic supporter, who has been involved in AbM since the Kennedy road blockade in 2005, described what the general view was at the time:

> "When Abahlali started, there was an enormous distrust – massive! – of more powerful people, in material sense, saying that they were going to do things for the poor people. And, that was not out of a dissatisfaction with the left, but a dissatisfaction with the ANC, the councillors and various NGOs; development kind of NGOs, People had experiences, since the end of apartheid… constantly people arriving and saying: right, we are going to do this!... and feeling excited. And then being ignored or being betrayed" (AbM supporter 1, 2010).

Through publications such as AbM's Living Learning booklet[179], some AbM members questioned the role of 'experts', and the intentions behind certain collaborations:

> "From what we have seen, there are many at University who that think they are there to learn what to come and 'teach the poor' when they are finished studying. It is clear that they imagine they are our educators. They assume we are empty enough and stupid enough for others to learn what they decide, and that they will come and think for those of us who are poor and cannot think. But now we are having our own living learning – and so there is a confrontation brewing about who's teaching who" (Figlan *et al.*, 2009, p. 19).

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[177] External supporters, who were not shack dwellers.

[178] The interviewee refers to the youth arrested after the Kennedy road blockade in 2005 which initiated the movement. See Chapter 5, section 5.1.

[179] In 2008, some members of AbM and the Rural Network participated in a course entitled "Certificate in Education (Participatory Development)" (CEPD), at the University of KZN. During this course, The Church Land Programme (CLP) ran parallel discussions on *living politics*, where members of ABM and the Rural Network described their views, and developed ideas, about life in the shacks, and how to change their realities (Butler, 2009). In 2009, CLP published a booklet entitled 'Living Learning' which contained the written record of the discussions held between these members, see Figlan *et al*. (2009).

However, frequency of face-to-face interactions – and the help offered by supporters – has supported the development of trust among some members and supporters. One member explained:

> "But at some point, when they[180] realise all the external supporting they were getting – [from AbM supporters and] students – they realised they were all together" (AbM member 12, 2010).

Collaboration with external individual supporters and some organisations benefited AbM and some of its members. For instance, academic supporters brought in their experiences for obtaining permissions for marches; explained the process of issuing press releases; and supported members to access and understand legal procedures. Moreover, supporters broadened AbM's networks by creating new links with policy makers and academics, which became a source of information, capabilities, and influence for the organisation (AbM supporter 1, 2010; AbM supporter 2, 2010).

Different from what is assumed by some critics (Sinwell, 2010), some AbM members stated that these collaborations were based on mutual learning, trust and support; rather than control of experts exerted over "the uneducated".[181]

Despite these positive exchanges, throughout the development of AbM there were also some unfavourable experiences that reinforced the sense of mistrust among AbM's members. In one particular case – at the very beginning of the organisation's existence – a research institute of the University of Kwazulu-Natal, was accused of raising funds (online) on behalf of AbM, and using it for its own ends (AbM member 15, 2010; AbM member 20, 2010; Sacks, 2014; Tolsi, 2006b).

At that time, this institute claimed on its own website to represent AbM, and was sending funding proposals by email to funders. AbM members had no knowledge about the 'representation' or fundraising activity on its behalf. Moreover, members

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[180] "They", here, stands for the shack dwellers who were involved in the process of creating AbM.

[181] Two academic supporters interviewed (AbM supporter 1, 2010; AbM supporter 2, 2010) and a number of other AbM supporters who I talked to and observed – *e.g.* (Chance, 2010a) –often mentioned the importance of their links with AbM for their own development and learning.

had little or no understanding of what the internet – and internet tools – were at the time. Some AbM members felt betrayed through means that they did not understand. One member interviewed described this reaction:

> "I was very very very unhappy with myself when we heard that [the research institute] have sent emails and said Abahlali is this and that… and I don't know what kind of animal is that that they call email" (AbM member 20, 2010).[182]

As a response, AbM collectively and publically decided to cut all ties with this particular organisation (Abahlali baseMjondolo; AbM executive meeting at AbM's office, 2010; AbM member 15, 2010; AbM member 20, 2010). Some members stated that this particular incident created the necessity to have an AbM office, with access to a landline, and most important, access to computers and the internet.

6.2.1.3 Growth and the introduction of the internet

From 2005 until 2007, AbM had no access to the internet. Although AbM members were issuing press releases, these were sent in three different ways: a concise version of the story via SMS; via fax; and via email – the last two, sent by two or three academic supporters of AbM. According to one academic supporter, these press releases were targeting the media only, because at the time there was no network of AbM supporters (AbM supporter 1, 2010).

During this period, no AbM member had access to an email account. Of the four members who had previously used a computer (see section 6.1.3.2), none was using the internet, or any of its applications. Many interviewees described that at that time they felt there was no need for the internet in their lives.

The support offered by academics helped AbM with, for instance, contacting networks and gathering information. And although these academics were careful in not making any decisions, or speaking on AbM's behalf through the internet, they had an

[182] This member later revealed that he familiarised himself with the internet and email so that he would be able to know what people were saying about 'his movement', and inform other AbM members.

important role in pushing AbM members to become less dependent of supporters with internet access and realizing the potential of the internet for their organisation.[183]

The influence of academics, the resources and time they gave to AbM, and the example of misrepresentation by a research institute, influenced the decision to create an independent website for AbM, and to create opportunities for AbM members to learn and use internet tools.

The AbM website

AbM website was created in 2007 by one AbM supporter with access to the internet. Initially, the website was aimed at a national and international audience (*e.g.* NGOs, media, social movements), to provided an alterative view of AbM as opposed to the one created by local media. Although AbM members did not posses the technical expertise to operate the website, its entire content was, and still is, decided through AbM meetings. The creation of the AbM website contributed significantly to the development of the organisation.

The AbM website contains a variety of information, including: pictures; videos; press releases; newspaper articles about AbM; supporting statements for AbM from other organisations; pieces of individual writing (*e.g.* on conditions in informal settlements, unemployment); personal stories; information on crisis (*e.g.* shack fires, police violence); academic publications about AbM; AbM statements (*e.g.* against xenophobic attacks, political views, exposing corruption and threats made against individuals, groups, and the movement); reports on meetings, camps, marches, Annual General Meeting (AGM); election results; announcements, and much more.[184] Lastly, there is some information regarding other social movement organisations, for example, the Rural network, posted on AbM's website as a form of solidarity and networking.

[183] Further discussion on the protection of AbM decision-making outside the virtual space is discussed in this Chapter under the title "Some things can't be done online" in this section.

[184] These are just a few examples of the information available on the AbM website.

The website contains an archival database on the history of AbM, including articles, pictures, and events that have been posted online about AbM.[185] The way the website is organised offers an opportunity – probably not available to many grassroots organisations of this kind – for researchers, media, supporters, and the public in general to access the history, important events, successes and challenges faced by AbM and shack dwellers in South Africa.

The website has attracted funding to the causes of AbM from foundations, international organisations and NGOs. The funding has been important for the growth of the organisation.[186] The website is a useful channel for external people to inspect AbM's work and thus may facilitate funding. Funding is seen as crucial for AbM because "everything you touch, you need money" (AbM member 15, 2010). As AbM has no means to generate an income from members and is thus not self-sufficient, fundraising is essential for its day-to-day operations, such as office rental, the landline, internet connection, events, and transportation to attend marches. Through the narratives, newspaper and academic articles (posted on AbM website), pictures and videos, on issues such as shack fires and the Kennedy attacks, AbM has managed to generate outside support. For example, AbM has secured funding from Amnesty International and various religious organisations in Europe. This funding has been used to provide shelter and to pay for lawyers and legal fees.

However, how the website is maintained and the decision on what is published there poses several challenges for AbM members. The first challenge is related to access to technology and skills to operate such a technically complex and challenging medium.

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[185] Although the website was created in 2007, there are academic and newspaper articles, press releases; pictures, as well as other information predating the website launch.

[186] According to one member (AbM member 15, 2010), there are also other ways to support AbM without being directly involved in the movement. For example, some journalists and researchers have learned about the circumstances in which shack dwellers were living in South Africa through the website. After that, some became critical of the South African government, publishing academic and/or newspaper articles about this issue. According to another member interviewed, the website "has created our history, and became a resource for us. Maybe we are privileged to have that, it is not to everyone" (AbM member 12, 2010).

In 2007, the AbM headquarter office was established, inside a community hall at Kennedy. At the time, a broadband internet connection was not available in the area, and a simple landline was installed.[187] The internet was accessed through a dial-up connection from the landline in the office, which was "very weak and slow" (AbM supporter 1, 2010). Moreover, the AbM website – established by one academic supporter – only worked with broadband access. Thus, it was not possible to maintain or edit the website from the AbM office.

Maintaining the website has always been a problem for AbM members. Until 2009, apart from the lack of broadband service available[188], the website demanded technical expertise that only a few AbM members possessed.[189]

The maintenance of the website remained, until data was collected, sole responsibility of one academic supporter of AbM. As this academic supporter explained, he uploaded the content on to the website, but the "mandate" of what to upload there usually comes from the Secretary General of AbM. According to him, although he is currently based in Grahamstown[190], he is often in contact with AbM Secretary General through email, chat, SMS, and voice call (either through mobile phones or landline). However, the main channel of communication with this person is via Gmail chat. He also explained that he sometimes read articles about AbM in other media, and had set up a Google alert[191] for AbM-related articles online. Then, he sends these related articles to AbM through the Secretary General and to other three AbM members who have

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[187] Access to landlines is difficult inside informal settlements in South Africa.

[188] The AbM office was only able to have access to a broadband connection when it re-opened its office in downtown Durban, in February 2010. Currently, the office has a broadband connection through Telkom ADSL, which is paid by a specific grant given by a donor to support internet connection.

[189] Although they now have a broadband connection, only one AbM member – in fact the only person who held a full time position working at AbM office – knew how to operate AbM website. Nonetheless, this member is unable to update the website because of the high demand of work at the office (*e.g.* contact funders, media, supporters, communicate with government) (AbM member 15, 2010). This information refers to data collected up to June 2010. Currently (December 2014) AbM office has two people working full time, who are both using tools such as email, chat, Facebook and twitter. However, the website remains being mainly updated by an AbM supporter.

[190] Located in the Eastern Cape province, about 780Km from Durban.

[191] "Google Alerts are email updates of the latest relevant Google results (web, news, *etc.*), based on a particular choice of query or topic" (source: http://www.google.com/alerts)

access to email. At times, these forwarded articles are also published on the website, but only with AbM approval (AbM supporter 1, 2010).

The decision about what to post on the website is not necessarily discussed at each level of AbM structure, but there are different parameters to judge what should be posted online. Most of the content posted on AbM's website is unilaterally decided at the AbM organisational level.[192]

There is, however, some information published on the website (and sent through mailing lists) which has been discussed at AbM executive meetings. Press releases, for instance, are written by a team of AbM members elected for that particular task. Other decisions or political positions and opinions are also posted online after discussion at AbM executive meetings.

The website increased the number of individuals and organisations – *e.g.* academics, journalists, other social movements, and NGOs – contacting AbM. Academic supporters had previously printed email requests and brought them to AbM meetings.[193] Yet, these supporters were aware of the importance of autonomy, and thus encouraged, AbM members to be less dependent on them, and to be in direct contact with other organisations and their network of supporters.[194]

Some AbM members realised that they would have to engage with this new technology, for AbM to progress. One member explained that he took computing classes because of his involvement with AbM. He described that, if it was not for AbM, he "wouldn't have learned otherwise, because there wouldn't be a need for it" (AbM

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[192] Although the examples described above show a lack of overall consultation on what gets published on the website. The AbM leadership sees this information as simply mirroring what is in fact happening within the movement. If every decision made on what to post on the website had to be discussed with every member, some members explained, the website would not be as efficient because the process would be too slow (AbM member 2, 2010; AbM member 3, 2010; AbM member 15, 2010).

[193] See this section, under "Some things can't be done online".

[194] One AbM supporter described this view that AbM is dependent on outsiders referencing other social movements in South Africa. According to him, the issue of internet access among different members often means making decisions undemocratically, mostly by 'middle class' members with access to the internet. This, he explains, was exactly what they were trying to avoid (AbM member 1, 2010).

member 12, 2010).[195] At the time, computer courses were not easily accessible or affordable for shack dwellers. Interviewees often mention the lack of opportunities and training on how to use computers and the internet.[196]

Although some AbM members became aware of how technology could be used to manipulate them, the role of some expert supporters was important to overcome this technological dependency. This and the next section show that some academics play a role in supporting the organisation with tools and training fundamental to the appropriation of the internet by (some) AbM members.

Computer and internet training course

AbM "computer training" (as it is generally referred by interviewees) took place in 2007, and was organised and hosted by a group of academic supporters, through the University of Kwazulu-Natal (UKZN). The training program was organised by an AbM supporter (hereafter referred to as "the organiser") as a basic computer skills course, and later a second part on advance computer skills which included some internet tools. There were a total of forty students selected for the training, coming from a variety of informal settlements associated to or which had an AbM branch.

The organiser first selected six AbM members who had used or had some basic training in computer skills. They received a short course to "freshen-up" their computer skills, and prepare them to teach other AbM members. These members, together with the organiser, became the facilitators for the course, for a total of 10 sessions, which took place on Saturday mornings at the UKZN campus. The computer training was offered in isiZulu, isiXhosa and English languages.

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[195] He continued: "I need to know how to update the website, how to use it, but also to receive emails, coming from all ends. When the movement was being built, there was a demand for me to really understand these things. But there was not specific training around, up until the computer classes at UKZN" (AbM member 12, 2010).

[196] AbM supporters created opportunities for AbM members to learn how to use computers and the internet in order to help with the growing need of members to engage. For example, one academic supporter created a computer training course for AbM members, using a computing facilities of the University of Kwazulu-Natal (UKZN) campus, in Durban.

The course attempted to bring students' realities and priorities to the centre of the computer skills training. Since the first sessions, the curriculum was decided by the students through an open discussion. At the end of each session, the students would evaluate the content learned and discuss what they would like to do in the next session (AbM member 27, 2010). One AbM supporter described why the training was important for the participants in the way it was developed:

> "It was important at a number of levels. One, it was a skills transfer; you are helping people who never used a computer before, at the end able to use the internet; use email, type a document; [the organiser] got them to type their life histories. So it is important from a tool point of view, it was important from a content point of view, because people were articulating some stuff about themselves using email and so on. It was important from a kind of... formation point of view, in both directions. Kind of almost... an element of self-actualization, it has an exciting thing, a world I can be part of" (AbM supporter 2, 2010).

Among interviewees, there were three facilitators of the computer training and ten members who did the course – among those, seven also completed the advanced training which included accessing and using the internet. Interviewees who did not participate in the computer training included individuals who were not members at the time of the course (seven interviewees), and members who described different reasons for not participating. Among the interviewees who chose not participate in the training, some were dismissive of the training, and stated that 'computers' (referring both to computer and the internet) are not something they would be capable to learn and use (AbM member 6, 2010; AbM member 16, 2010). Other members who chose not to participate gave reasons such as: work, travel cost, and choosing to give their place in the training to others.[197]

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[197] One member explained why she decided to give her place to the youth: "I think that the youth must learn because they are the future. The elder cleared the way, now the youth must take upon the struggle. I think that the youth need the chance, and it is easier for them learn" (AbM member 11, 2010). It is not clear from the interview data who chose not to participate in the computer training, or if members were indeed concerned about helping the youth to learn, or felt 'unsuitable' to learn computer skills. However, some narratives – or the way interviewees were dismissive of the subject – reflect some of the views described in the section 6.1 on PEB. Curiously, all interviewees – with the exception of one – who did not participate in the training were around or older than 40 years old. Other issues associated with the non-participation of members included the cost of transport to the University

The computer training was an initiative to encourage AbM members, to use both the computer and the internet in order to support the growth and overall structure of the organisation. However, during interviews and informal discussions with some AbM members, criticism emerged of some participants who joined the computer course motivated by self-improvement, and not to support AbM. One AbM facilitator of the course explained:

> "People just wanted to know how to use the computer, to get a certificate and look for a job. But I think none of them got a job with that certificate, because it was a very simple one for basic tools. The companies demand more knowledge of it and people who have at least finished school – which most members didn't" (AbM member 29, 2010).

An academic supporter involved in the training, described a similar view but he believed that this expectation changed during the training. According to him, there were some participants who probably joined thinking they could get better jobs with that training, however, during the course they realised that the certificate would not provide them with that. The certificates provided at the end of the course did not offer much value when applying for a job (AbM supporter 2, 2010).

Among the ten interviewees who participated in the computer training, none described – or declared – joining the course expecting to get a better job. All stated that they were motivated to join because of AbM. Although the motivation was AbM, there was a degree of self-recognition associated with that.[198]

Yet, after the completion of the computer training, most participants interviewed did not have the opportunity to practice the skills learned. Since then, these participants described that they were no longer able to use the computer. The issue of lack of access and how that impacted on these participants is further discussed in section 6.3.2.

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campus, and 'unwelcoming' treatment of security guards at the reception gate of the University (AbM supporter 1, 2010).

[198] See further discussion under reflection, section 6.5.5.1.

However, there were a few participants who not only developed computer skills, but established a presence and became 'fluent' in the virtual space. For four AbM members, the fact that they could use the internet for the benefit of AbM was a great achievement for breaking the cycle of dependency on internet use through academics (AbM supporter 1, 2010).[199] And these new skills became especially important for the leadership of AbM.

Some things can't be done online

Despite the entrance of a few AbM members into the virtual world, most communication and decision-making processes continued to be made through face-to-face interaction. For instance, before AbM members were able to access the internet, academic supporters would receive emails addressed to AbM and pass them on to AbM members. Every email – *e.g.* inquiries, proposals of support and partnership; media inquiries – was printed by the supporters and brought to AbM office or to meetings. The content of the emails would be discussed in the meetings with other AbM members, where they would draft a reply and the academics would send the reply on their behalf. Often, a rise in the number of emails, or the fact that during AbM meetings there were other priorities, meant that replies were very slow. One academic supporter explained that he would often warn the sender of the email not to expect a quick reply to their inquiry. He further described:

> "There is an interesting issue that arises, because since globally, social movements started to operate by email, they've operated at a really quick pace. People would often send emails saying, I would like to do x, and people replied within hours: 'it's agreed'. It is quite difficult to make people understand that it couldn't work like that; that a hard copy had to be printed and taken to the meeting, and that maybe it would not even be discussed at the meeting, if there was other issues. It might not be a priority. It might take two weeks before it's discussed. So there was a real issue of the movement having some mediated access to email, but the real question of... a lack of a kind of fit between how, people who were involved in that kind of

[199] Another AbM member, who at the time of date collection was not working full time at AbM office, is currently online and using tools such as Facebook, emails, chat, Skype, twitter. Since she started to work at AbM office in July 2010, she had the chance to develop many computer and internet skills.

> activism worked, the pace that they worked, the pace of an organisation like Abahlali could work at."

He continued:

> "We were very very careful of... that we never fell into the trap of – which certainly had been the case of some social movements in Durban, prior to Abahlali, where people who had internet access, email access, who just made decisions for them. I mean, we never did that, we were very very scrupulous careful to do that" (AbM supporter 1, 2010).

After the computer training, and because some members started to have access to computers and the internet, the role of these academic supporters radically changed. Some AbM members were no longer dependent on the academics access and internet skills – apart from updating the website – to deal with external communication.

However, access and skills to use the internet by some AbM members did not mean that all email inquiries; requests and proposals were swiftly replied to. In fact, even though some AbM members were exchanging emails with the media, funders, and supporters, AbM's policy was that no decision could be made by email without consulting with other AbM members. As I have often been able to observe, when the office received emails with requests, proposals of funding, or invitations, these emails would be printed and brought to executive meetings with the leadership of all community branches. If the request demanded a major consultation, the branch leadership would bring the request to their community meetings to be debated – or voted on. The way AbM makes decisions means that, in some cases, there is a very slow response to external proposals.

Slow responses may incur opportunity costs. Some members acknowledged that not every email communication is passed on to all members or in all meetings, otherwise "the movement would be not only slow, but completely stuck" (AbM member 3, 2010). According to some interviewees, there are a few cases that do not demand a decision to be made in the name of AbM where a reply is provided without consultation – *e.g.* information on events; exchanging information with supporters. Judgements and decisions on what to share are subjective, but where a decision pertains to the goals or

direction of the organisation (*e.g.* associations with other groups) consultation is sought.

6.2.1.4 Growth of AbM: the role of mobile phones

In 2006 AbM expanded, from Kennedy to other informal settlements. This geographic expansion meant an increase in the demand for phone usage – both landline and mobile phones.[200]

With the establishment of the AbM office in Kennedy, in 2007, and the availability of a landline, most communication among members from different settlements took place through the landline. The landline was used mainly by members working at the organisational level, to keep in contact with AbM's branches; to arrange visits and meetings; to receive inquiry calls from external organisations; and to communicate with supporters, lawyers working on AbM cases, and government officials. The office landline was often, and still is, very busy and it is a key communication channel for the movement (Chance, 2011a). It is an important asset of the movement – paid for by AbM fund raising efforts.

For those who have access to the office, the landline is also a way to reduce the costs incurred by personal mobile phones. The landline may only be used for AbM related activities and it is a major saving for some members.[201]

Generally, members' use of mobile phones for AbM related activities included communicating with the AbM office, with other members, lawyers, media, supporters and a large array of purposes regarding movement activities and the general needs of

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[200] In the beginning, AbM was a very localised organisation, most of the communities involved were very close to each other – mainly Kennedy, Foreman road and Pemary Ridge informal settlements. Communication was mainly face-to-face and to a certain extent, through mobile phones (Chance, 2010a)

[201] As one member explained: "Sometimes I go to the office just because I need to make calls, I need to communicate". However, when he is not in the office – and if he receives SMS or 'please call me' that demands a reply – if he does not have the funds to call the person back, he forwards the messages to the Secretary General – who is mostly at the office – asking her to return the call (AbM member 12, 2010).

their respective communities. Some of these members' mobile phones operated as *hubs* between their communities and AbM, passing information, mobilizing for all sorts of activities and supporting each other. In some cases, mobile phones are also used to remind people of events and actions that require support – *e.g.* court cases.

The high cost of airtime in South Africa (Duncan, 2010; Smith, 2009) was brought up by all interviewees, and cited as an overall problem for AbM members. Some members (*e.g.* those with leadership positions) were affected more than others by the high expenditure on airtime, this is further discussed in section 6.4.3. A number of interviewees described measures to control expenditure on airtime.[202] However, some older AbM members described not being able to use alternative options to control expenditure. For instance, older members rarely used SMS feature, which is cheaper than calling, because they did not know how.

An insight into the role of mobile phones can be gained by looking at the differences in mobile phone use and expenditure for AbM related activities among AbM members. Interviewees can be divided into three groups, based on their expenditure with AbM related activities: of the 30 members interviewed, 20% (6 respondents) spent none or insignificant amount of their airtime with AbM related activities; 57% (17 respondents) spent a moderate to high percentage of their personal airtime with AbM related activities, and 23% (7 respondents) used their personal phones almost exclusively for AbM related activities. See below.

Six out of thirty interviewed members rarely used their mobile phones for AbM related issues. However, observation indicated that this was true for the majority of members of AbM. For these members, their engagement with AbM remained at the local level, and when they participated in other activities outside their communities,

[202] Some members, for instance, expressed their concern regarding cost: "The cost of it it's a big problem for me, if it was cheaper I would use it more often" (AbM member 10, 2010). "Sometimes I buy 15 Rands, sometimes 30 Rands, and sometimes you don't buy anything because you don't have money, when you have got money you buy more airtime, when you have got less money, you buy less airtime. Actually, airtime is always needed, so it just depend on how much you have in your pocket. When I have more airtime, I make more calls" (AbM member 20, 2010).

communication was mainly 'mediated' through local leadership.[203] Some stated having helped AbM leadership by receiving calls and passing on the information, face-to-face, to other residents (AbM member 16, 2010); in some even rarer cases, these members have lent their mobiles to another member who was supporting the community, or made calls to the offices in times of crises (*e.g.* eviction, threats, shack fires).

The most interesting finding relates to the remaining 24 interviewees, and their use of mobile phones. These members have drastically raised the amount of airtime spent and changed the reasons for using it. These AbM members reported that they cut back on using their phones to call friends and family, and cut back on other household needs to buy airtime for AbM related activities.

Among these 24 interviewees, 17 reported spending between 50 and 80 % of their total monthly airtime on AbM. However, not all of these members have a constant high expenditure of airtime on AbM related issues and activities. For example, during times of crises, such as evictions, these members described spending more on airtime: "during the eviction, I used a lot, maybe 30 to 45 Rands a day.[204] We mostly called [AbM member 12] and his committee" (AbM member 10, 2010). However when there is not an on-going issue or event, mobile phone airtime expenditure tends to reduce. One member explained that during the organisation of marches or other more intense mobilization events, she ends up spending much more of her personal airtime on AbM (AbM member 17).

The remaining 7 interviewees (out of the 24), all holding leadership positions within AbM, had by far the highest mobile phone expenditure on AbM related activities. These members described spending between 70 to 100% of their total monthly airtime expenditure.

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[203] See further discussion on issues with funding and leadership dependency in this section.

[204] 30 to 45 Rands spent with airtime a day is extremely high for shack dwellers. At the time of data collection, many interviewees described spending between 50 to 150 ZAR a month.

All members interviewed struggled with funds to pay for airtime. Of the 24 members who used their mobile phones for AbM related activities the 14 who were either employed or self-employed described funds available to spend on airtime as being very limited, while the 10 unemployed interviewees were either dependent on other sources such as a family member's income or government grant (*e.g.* child support). For these unemployed members, the fact that they did not have a job often meant that they had more time to dedicate to AbM activities, and to assist other AbM members and community residents.

However, funds to spend on airtime represented a constant struggle. When these unemployed interviewees were asked about how they afforded mobile phone airtime, most described receiving small donations from family members and other community members; or a small stipend from AbM to help organise particular events (see organisation of marches below). Most of them described difficulties to manage limited funds, and often being unable to communicate with other members by phone due to a lack of funds.[205]

For some particular activities, some members receive a small airtime stipend from the AbM budget, to be spent in organising events such as marches. In times of crises, there were cases in which AbM supporters bought airtime to aid members' mobilization role.

Overall, for these members, concerns over the high cost of airtime – associated with their extensive need to use mobile phones – represented an operational problem to the development of and engagement with AbM.

Moreover, AbM members often complained of running out of airtime "too fast". The overall preference for voice calls over SMS is an example of this problem. Calls were by far the most common feature used among AbM members. Even among members who

[205] One unemployed member, for instance, explained that she worries that sometimes things are not moving or that she is not informed of things. And she is upset that she cannot call, because she has no money. She also feels responsible because she should be informed, for the benefit of the community, but she is dependent on other AbM members getting in contact with her (AbM member 11, 2010).

felt confident enough to use SMS tended to prefer to make calls, and only use SMS for particular tasks or events.

A common feature that emerged from interviews and observations is a feeling among AbM members that if there is an urgent matter, or something important to be deliberated, it should be discussed face-to-face. If there were no immediate possibilities to discuss an urgent matter face-to-face, some AbM members would then opt to make a call, but rarely – for instance – send an SMS.[206]

There are a few reasons identified for this behaviour. An obvious reason is the cost of airtime, which limits the use of mobile phones. However, there are other aspects such as language and culture. For instance, the first language of most AbM members is either isiZulu or isiXhosa, and the most common languages spoken within AbM. isiZulu and isiXhosa are languages, according to interviewees, which have "very long words" and sentences, giving the impression that it takes longer for information to be conveyed. To convey a message by SMS, is perceived to be impractical or impossible, hence, the 'need' to communicate face-to-face or through voice calls.[207]

Finally, there were some cultural aspects identified through interviews that support the importance of face-to-face and voice call communication within AbM. For instance, when a group from a particular informal settlement, or a CDC, get in contact with AbM to find out more about the movement, AbM would always come to visit them and speak face-to-face, so a relationship of trust is established (AbM member 15, 2010). After relationship of trust is established, they can move on to communicate, organise meetings and activities over the phone.

This establishment of trustworthy relationship face-to-face from the start is confirmed through narratives from interviews and meetings. For some interviewees, face-to-face interactions and the attention paid to their problems were inspirational, and

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[206] See discussion on SMS and call features in section 6.3.3.

[207] See this Chapter, section 6.3.3.

motivated them to join. A couple of members mentioned that when they first contacted AbM, the leadership of the movement came to meet them.[208] For these members, the physical presence of AbM members, made them feel important, that someone cared about them.[209] A member, for instance, explained why face-to-face it so important:

> "I think it is very important to recognize that traditional people, sitting down like this, has been the way of connecting. Part of it is a kind of respect, to whom you engage directly. But it is more about promoting the social cohesion; you want to be realistic" (AbM member 12, 2010).[210]

6.2.1.5 Face-to-face interaction: localized context and self-determination

A vital element of AbM's structure are the opportunities for face-to-face interaction, such as meetings, camps, march mobilizations, etc. The most common events are community meetings, and AbM executive meetings, which include the executive committee, and members from different informal settlements. Through these events members have the opportunity to reflect on context and experiences and discuss actions and solutions to issues that are meaningful to them – described in the literature as localized context (Lucio-Villegas, 2009).

Interviewees portrayed meetings as an opportunity to learn about their rights, as well as members' realities and suffering. Despite living in the same conditions, AbM

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[208] As described by a member: "Not only that, but they visit us; they came here and explained to us… No one came here before them [AbM]" (AbM member 8, 2010).

[209] For other particular events in which members required, for example, the attention of a lawyer, a face-to-face discussion was crucial. For instance, a member described when AbM lawyer came to her house to hear her testimonial regarding a threat from a local chief: "he even came to my house... twice he was here. He also witnessed all the fight and the mess when the police came here" (AbM member 6, 2010).

[210] He further explained that the problem with technologies such as mobile phones is that they can be perceived as 'western culture'. He described that, traditionally, phones (mobile phones and previously land lines) were used for emergencies. For instance, an individual would phone the telecom, which in turn would connect them with a relative, to inform about the death of someone. He explained that, in circumstances such as this, the call had to be brief and was just to send a message, because it would be expected that the person would go home, to discuss the problem with the family. It was – and still is – he said, a sign of respect (AbM member 12, 2010).

members described having no links with other residents prior to their engagement with AbM.

Some members stated that before taking part in meetings, they did not know that "neighbours" in their settlement were also "suffering". Some described their surprise to find out that people were experiencing similar problems as themselves. These members stated that before joining AbM they were not as involved in the community. By participating in meetings, and learning about one another these members now feel that working together is important.

Other interviewees gave similar accounts, for example emphasising mutual learning as a result of face-to-face interactions. However, they also emphasized the emotional support and creation of social bonds achieved through these exchanges.[211] One member specifically raised this point about meetings:

> "The most important thing is that, as much as you are a leader, but you don't know what is happening in every settlement... and in each and every shack. [Meetings] is a good space for each and everyone, even the ones that are not leaders, to share their own experiences, to learn from each other on how to deal with problems, how to face problems. Or how to deal with future problems, how to prevent things" (AbM member 15, 2010).

Pushing for face-to-face interactions is a central characteristic of AbM's structure and organisation. Some members explained that it is important to "keep the spirit alive" by often promoting events and opportunities for people to meet, talk, and share.[212]

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[211] When asked about the importance of participation in meetings, two members described the following:

"The meetings, the marches, the camps were important because it's were you learn a lot of things, like if I had personal stress at home I would go to this things just to be with people and listen and talk, to get motivated. Sometimes other people's point could help you to understand what I was going through" (AbM member 28, 2010).

"Personally it also helps me to heal the problems that I have, maybe to see that I'm not the only one who is running through those problems" (AbM member 13, 2010).

[212] One member from a rural area explained that he tries to keep constant contact, communicate, and involve all members, "so people can feel important and part of the struggle. Something similar to

Some interviewees described the use of kinds of speech and use of words that promote rights, welcomes discussions and views, and encourage individual autonomy, self-confidence and self-determination. One member said:

> "[in meetings] you learn about ways to approach problems with the police and how to solve it. You learn how to be independent. You don't have to wait for the President of Abahlali to come and solve your problem, you learn to deal with a lot of things in meetings" (AbM member 4, 2010).

Similarly, two other members also described this view:

> "what Abahlali is doing is helping people to know about themselves, to fight for themselves, to think like what other options they can do to uplift themselves and also to say no to what they call a top down system" (AbM member 3, 2010).
>
> "You do it, and we will follow you. Or we'll support you on what you are doing. But you must do it yourself, so no one can say that one is pushing the other to do this" (AbM member 15, 2010)

During meetings, some leaders and other more engaged members, were constantly telling other members that AbM is their movement, and everyone should participate, have a say and become a leader. This practice was used even in first discussions with new AbM branches (Introductory Community Visit at Ridge View transit camp, 2010). The language used in meetings contained encouraging words, urging members to stand up and to be independent:

> "Everyone is a leader in this community. If the municipality comes to evict you, you don't need to call your leader, you should lead and say: I'm protected by the law; I have rights" (Community visit at Reservoir Hills informal settlement, 2010).

This kind of speech was witnessed in every kind of meeting, executive and community meetings, community visits, introductory visits, and in all other events observed while conducting fieldwork. This dynamic seem to have been important for individual members to overcome feelings of inability, and encourage them to develop self-confidence (see further discussion in section 6.5).

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perpetual contact, which is not exactly happening, and probably one of the reasons why people drift away" (AbM member 30, 2010).

The next section describes another important element of face-to-face interactions that was identified in this research. Singing and praying represented an essential motivational and bonding feature of AbM meetings.

Singing and Praying

Spiritual expression was an important part of AbM meetings[213] where it took the form of praying and singing songs of worship and struggle – including traditional and 'adapted' anti-apartheid songs.[214]

When talking about the meaning of praying, interviewees described that praying is a way to stay close to God; to ask God to stay with them – the poor. Interviewees described that some prayers ask God to illuminate them to choose the right path. Some interviewees also saw praying as a unifying, bonding act where they pray together to achieve things together. Often, interviewees described that praying is important because it gives them strength and makes them more confident (AbM member 8, 2010).

Even though most praying was based on the Christian faith, interviewees who were not Christians also took part in the praying. These non-Christian members also talked about a sense of unity, and that praying – as well as singing – makes them feel as one. For instance, a Muslim member did not feel discouraged when it comes to praying:

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[213] The only exception are the meetings at Motala Heights B, were the majority of members are Indian decedents, from different religious backgrounds, and praying is not part of their meetings, neither is singing. However, when members of Indian descend were at marches or meetings at other informal settlements, they did engage in singing and praying.

[214] For instance, when visiting a community, AbM members would start singing in isiZulu: "Come out of your houses, we are here now…" (Community Visit at Toghat informal settlement, 2010). Other songs would make fun of politics and talk about the power of the people: "The cowards are running backwards, we the leaders are running forward…" (Community visit at Reservoir Hills informal settlement, 2010). The shouting of 'mottos' was common during these events, the most common being: Amandla! Awethu! (Power! To the people!) – a popular resistance call of liberation movements during the Apartheid regime and still often used by social movements in South Africa (Dawson, 2012).

> "Praying, it is important to believe, it doesn't matter in what you believe, but you have to believe in something, so I don't bother if it is Christian praying, when they pray I also do my Muslim prayers" (AbM member 28, 2010).

Singing is often described as a joyful and empowering aspect of AbM's interactions. As one member described, it is a way to remind them where they are coming from, and sometimes makes them forget about their problems and allows them to be happy (AbM member 4, 2010). Other members stated that:

> "Singing also empowers a lot, it raises the spirit, because as you sing you communicate the challengers,[215] over and over by singing. You remain conscious that this is what you are living, and this is what you want" (AbM member 7, 2010).
>
> "The music means to me that I should take a break from concentrating on issues and matters, and try to be happy, and then praying is when we are asking for guidance from God" (AbM member 25).
>
> "Singing motivates you, it opens up your spirit, your morale" (AbM member 28, 2010).

From observations, and based on interviewees' stories, praying and singing play a significant role in de-stressing members, and raising the general morale. While praying focused on giving direction, singing had an "energising" aspect – through singing, members seemed to relax, to laugh more. This aspect further analysed in section 6.5.2.

6.2.2 The effects of the Kennedy attacks

The final aspect of the social context is the effect of the 2009 Kennedy attacks on AbM and its members. The attacks had a significant impact on AbM individual members, branches, and the structure of the organisation.

Individual victims of the attacks had to deal with the physical, economic and psychological trauma caused by the threat to their lives and destruction of their property, as well as the uncertainty of their future. To support some of Kennedy

[215] By "communicating the challenges" this interviewee meant that they share between them and 'tell God' about the problems there are facing.

victims AbM's displaced leadership organised weekly meetings, through mobile phones, every Sunday, at a park in central Durban.[216] The meetings were an attempt to keep in contact with victims – who were displaced around Durban and to rural areas – to share grievances, provide emotional support, and discuss alternatives to their current situation.[217]

The closing of the office in Kennedy had a severe impact on AbM, with the loss of landline as an additional resource constraint on some individual members. Some of the members who lived in Kennedy, and who could no longer rely on AbM's office landline and internet, were forced to use their personal mobile phones and airtime, to support the victims and to stay in contact with other members.[218]

To many informal settlements associated to AbM, the lack of a landline during the months that AbM did not have an office, represented an obstacle to communication and a major drawback on processes already taking place (*e.g.* offering support on cases of evictions; formation of new branches). In an email of 27th March 2011, Chance (2011a) explained that during this period, some AbM branches such as Eshowe – were left in the dark about what was happening with the organisation, because they could not call the office or reach some of the members on their mobile phones.[219]

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[216] All of the displaced victims were living in hiding places away from Kennedy.

[217] These meetings were not open to all AbM members – only for the victims of the attacks – and there was a certain level of secrecy to protect the attendees who were still under threat and psychologically stressed as a result of the events.

[218] A displaced member from Kennedy, gave more details about specific things that have changed since the attacks. For instance, before the attacks, AbM leadership and the KRDC were organising meetings using a loudhailer, and there rarely was a need to use the personal airtime of members for activities such as this. This member, for instance, mainly used the phone to stay in touch with members from other communities, and to invite members from other communities to events and activities. He also used his personal mobile phone to hear from AbM members from other communities about how things were going in their respective communities – or calling just to chat. However, now he spends most of his airtime with the victims of the attacks, and less with other AbM members. Although he gets all invitations and information on his mobile he thinks, "[communication] is less [frequent] than before when we were all together at Kennedy Road. I think I'm less involved with Abahlali now, because it is a hard circumstance" (AbM member 26, 2010).

[219] There are a number of reasons to suggest why members of these AbM branches could not reach the personal mobile phones of AbM leadership. For instance, a few members felt overwhelmed with the crises, and had more urgent matters to deal with – such as providing a safe place to their families.

Some members mentioned that many of AbM members drifted away from the movement, due to the lack of contact.[220] ICTs might play an important role in maintaining an organisation over time by ensuring cohesion, and resilience through making available additional channels of communication (Donner, 2008c; Garrett, 2006; Papacharissi, 2002; Rheingold, 2002, 2008). This role of ICTs on the long-term viability of an organisation, however, was not explored in this research.

It was not only AbM branches that were left in the dark. The communication difficulties which emerged as a result of the Kennedy attacks affected the organisational structure of AbM. One member explained:

> "people were calling each other all the time. Everyone was confused. I was receiving emails from friends, media, the alliance, supporters" (AbM member 21, 2010).

This was an intense period, where there was great demand from media, supporters, and many others to know more of what was going on with AbM, and to find out what kind of support AbM needed. AbM members had to adapt some ways and media to communicate with the different groups.[221] For instance, the lack of access to the internet meant that much of the communication made through the mailing list, was either limited or made on behalf of AbM through the academics and others supporters who were in contact with the stranded leadership. Mobile phones were the primary

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Moreover, due to the amount of threats some members received over their phone – discussed in section 6.6.2.2 – they avoided speaking on the phone or giving much information over the phone.

[220] While I was on my fieldwork, members of the AbM interim committee and a few other members, started visiting former AbM branches, as well as communities which were interested in joining the movement. The intention was to re-establish contacts lost after the dismantlement of AbM office, and assure them that the movement was still alive. The visits were also an opportunity to explain what happened at Kennedy, to discuss problems in the community and future actions. The face-to-face visits were an important way to re-establish links damaged by the months of silence caused by the attacks.

[221] An AbM supporter gives another example of adapted communication, in layers, which happened as a result of the lack of access to landline and the internet. According to him, during the period post attacks; a member from Motala Heights was elected to be the press representative of AbM on the attacks. This member did not have easy access to the internet; all press releases that were issued after the attacks; and numerous news on the attacks published in different websites. For this reason, he described, there was a huge effort by a number of academics and supporters who had access to the internet to collect everything that was posted online regarding the attacks, and bring to this member in Motala Heights. This way, this member would be updated with all information available and be able to speak to the media, who were often contacting her on her mobile phone (AbM supporter 2, 2010).

communication medium available to AbM leadership, scattered throughout Kwazulu-Natal and Eastern Cape states.

6.3 Resources

The social context of AbM has influenced the development and acquisition of skills, capabilities and experiences – *i.e.* resources – of some individual members. There is a relationship between the specific resources developed and some aspects reviewed above, such as self-organisation; localized context; aspects of collective processes; as well as emotions and feelings (described next).

6.3.1 Skills, capabilities and experiences

Aspects discussed above (*e.g.* self-organisation; collaborating with external supporters) suggest that they influence how AbM members acquire and develop skills, capabilities and experiences. The majority of members gave similar accounts of learning and sharing knowledge, yet – as it will be reviewed next under Sense of Agency – they differed on autonomy. Some members gave accounts of developing leadership skills and being able to deal – autonomously – with government officials and services. Other members referred to the support from AbM's leadership as an important asset – and demonstrated a certain level of dependency towards other members.

Some members described that face-to-face meetings provided an opportunity to express views and give their input. Observations indicate that these members also spoke more often and confidently during meetings.[222]

A similar development was not observed among other members. Even after motivational words and opportunities were presented for "everyone to speak" it

[222] One member, for instance, described that she used to be an introvert person, but she learned how to be extrovert: "Before, if I didn't like something, I would keep quiet. I learned to speak out [in meetings] and speak my mind, don't matter how the other person would feel, as long as he or she knows my side, how am I feeling" (AbM member 15, 2010).

seems that some members "prefer to listen". Despite the opportunity and encouragement to speak in AbM meetings, some members have remained silent.

Other members described developing skills and capabilities such as the ability to speak in public and addressing different audiences. These members described that interactions with lawyers, policy makers, and others, was very important for them to learn how to speak and deal with experts, or government officials:

> "If a municipality officials come to the communities and whenever you ask them about the houses, they always says yes, this is part of the program; that's why we came to do 1, 2, 3 because the housing is around the corner. And when they talk about 'around the corner' you think about next week, or next month. But now, with my understanding, when they come, I concentrate on what type of program they are talking about. And I try to lead them to the community will on what, where and when, in communities will. Not to listen to them on what, where and when. Because they won't tell you the truth" (AbM member 7, 2010)

> "You learn how to chair a meeting, you learn how to talk – but you need to be there the meeting language is very different from street language. There is a sort of aggressiveness in the street language – often used for marches. This way of speaking, cannot be used in a meeting, for example, with the municipality. If you are negotiating, you are partnering with one another. Even though you don't fear them, you can't shout: 'down with …'" (AbM member 20, 2010).

These members often spoke of the importance of using the right words in meetings and gatherings. What some of these members described as: "I learned how to be a leader", frequently means developing self-confidence as well as realising the type of speech necessary to motivate other members; language that is also used to mobilize shack dwellers to join AbM.

However, mobilization depends on organisation, a function that few members undertook. Although, some members organise at the local level, during AbM executive meetings for instance (organisational level), they depended on a small group of members to lead and organise.[223]

[223] This will be further discussed in section 6.4.3.

Organisational skills are important for AbM. The organisation of marches – including logistics, obtaining permissions, liaising with the media, producing information material, briefings on conduct and legal rights – is a good example of that.[224] Knowing where and how to find and access official government documents, as well as the ability to understand government jargon on official documents, are important skills, but not necessarily acquired by every AbM member. These skills were observed only among few AbM members.[225] These members tend to hold leadership positions, and demonstrated a greater sense of responsibility towards AbM and its members.

Generally, these members explained that they had to learn about a number of issues related to their "struggle". One member explained that "[leaders] need to have a great level of understanding to be in the struggle". Accordingly: "A leader has to read and write. Sometimes a leader receives documents that if they are uneducated they won't be able to understand it" (AbM member 15, 2010).[226]

Next, sections 6.3.2 and 6.3.3, look respectively at which internet and mobile phone skills and capabilities were developed. Both sections start by including a description of how individuals developed – or not –these skills and capabilities, and thus bring together and revisits some of the information which has been looked at before.

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[224] A particular example of this was observed at a meeting to organise the 'March to Zuma' event (AbM executive meeting at AbM's office, 2010). Another example was an application to obtain a particular government document which contained the list of informal settlements selected for upgrading, and the ones selected for demolition. When the document was made available to AbM, AbM members, together with academics and supporting NGOs, digested the information, and passed the information on to affected informal settlements.

[225] There was no indication that all members knew how to access or understand such kind of documents. The majority of members depended on few other members to find and share relevant information in a format that is accessible to them. Particularly since the language (or jargon) used in government documents; laws; amendments; and other documents containing relevant information on shack dwellers rights, are – when accessible – incomprehensible for most shack dwellers.

[226] Indeed, writing became a powerful skill developed by very few AbM members. This is not referring to general literacy, but the writing of pieces, including discussions on society, politics, law, rights, poverty, and many other subjects, publish by these members on the website, newspaper, university colloquium, *etc.* This skill will be further discussed in this Chapter, section 6.6.

6.3.2 Influence on the use of computers and the internet

The computer skills course was the first opportunity some members had to learn about computers and internet tools. Yet, a number of factors limited practising and further development of computer and internet skills. Lack of access, was identified as a major concern and obstacle among the participants of AbM computer course.

Although there are a number of internet cafes in town, most interviewees stated that they had not been able to afford transportation to these places.[227] The time and cost to use the computer and internet, especially for beginners, can be very high. One member explained:

> "It is a problem, because you pay a fee restricted to time. Last time – early 2008 – 7 Rands for 15min. You pay the 28 Rands, but you are not fast because you are still learning, as you start typing and receiving email, the time is nearly finished. Hard! It is not cost effective, too expensive, so I decided not to go anymore" (AbM member 7, 2010).

Some members who lived close to the AbM office at Kennedy were able to, at times, practice on one of the two computers available. However, the priority of use was for AbM related activities, and the people responsible for them. Computers at the office were rarely available, or for short periods only. Overall, limited physical resources meant that participants were unable to practice the skills learned during the training, and eventually forgot how to use most tools learned.

Yet, AbM members who participated in the course, and who could practice at the office, were able to develop skills and capabilities which made them more self-sufficient.[228] Through the growing demands in the office, these members started to

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[227] Apart from internet cafes, some public libraries offer free access – for a limited time. However, for most AbM members, public libraries are usually far from where they reside or work, hence, an extra cost.

[228] For example, academics played a central supporting role in the creation of AbM website, this role changed over time and became more peripheral. AbM members no longer needed the academics' support to access emails, reply to media and supporters, send press releases, contact funders or policy makers, as well as many other online related activities. AbM was able to expand its support network

use email and web based chat programmes to communicate with supporters, lawyers, and the media. [229] These members learned how to compile a database of contacts for the mailing list, which disseminated information on AbM. They were able to mobilize resources and support, legal assistance and representation, share news through their website and mailing lists, as well as other activities. Moreover, the use of search engines and browsing websites of partner organisations, helped them to identify online content relevant to AbM's causes.

However, based on observations, there are other issues constraining internet use. While not explicitly mentioned by members interviewed, the inability of some to speak English constrained communication, especially when dealing with supporters, funders, and some government officials. Although the majority of AbM members interviewed spoke English – although not fluently – all members using internet tools spoke fluent English, with no exception.[230] An AbM supporter described the issue of language as creating the risk of forming a class distinction within AbM, by elevating those who speak English. Indeed, the development of internet skills and capabilities would probably not been possible for non-English speakers.

Internet skills and capabilities were not used for mobilizing and organising AbM members, yet it was essential to supplement and augment collaborations with external collaborators. The internet was employed as a tool to communicate with the media and AbM's external network – *e.g.* academics, supporters, and other NGOs.

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beyond academics, and gained access to information, funds and national and international publicity for its cause.

[229] A member explained that email and chatting is very important, for instance, to contact busy lawyers and AbM supporters, "you can't simply call them, it is easier to send an email, because the person would be able to reply to you" (AbM member 15, 2010). She also sends emails to friends of AbM, funders, and government officials – "even though they are not good at replying". She uses chat programmes quite often with AbM supporters, especially when coordinating activities. Skype is used for interviews with international organisations, including media, universities and other social movements.

[230] Important to note that the majority of members of AbM, who I met or observed during fieldwork, did not or spoke very little English. Thus, my sample is not representative of the organisation as a whole.

6.3.3 Influence on the use of Mobile Phones

The role of mobile phones within AbM, developed with the growth and expansion of the organisation to other informal settlements. Mobile phones are, by far, the most used tool for communication among AbM members, when compared to the internet. Although this technology is wide spread among AbM members, not all members used it for AbM related activities. Factors that influence use among AbM members include cost, demand and dependency on leadership, language and development of trust, as discussed above.

Skills, capabilities and experiences acquired through the use of mobile phones are directly affected by the factors mentioned above. Moreover, data collected shows some interesting aspects regarding choices of particular mobile phone tools, as well as ways and purposes of using them. Skills, capabilities and experiences are reviewed here in light of these findings.

Mobilization and organisation

Some AbM members started to use mobile phones to organise and mobilize for AbM events. This repurposing of mobile phone use (*e.g.* organising AbM meetings, and events) was a result of their engagement with AbM. These members' mobile phones were used as hubs – and links – to access and mobilize residents of informal settlements for executive and community meetings, and other major events such as marches and demonstrations. Through mobile phones these members contacted academics and got the attention of the media to, for example, expose illegal evictions or police harassment.[231]

[231] While conducting my fieldwork, I received on two separate occasions, a forwarded SMS regarding a specific crises situation. One included a shack fire in an informal settlement in Siyanda (Abahlali baseMjondolo, 2010), upon arriving at the settlement, many AbM members – from several settlements – and AbM supporters had arrived, mobilized by the SMS. The second situation was an attack on a leader of the Landless People's Movement (LPM) (Landless People's Movement eTwatwa, 2010) which mobilized a large number of people. Other events featured in the media include, for example, protests of shack dwellers in South Africa met with police brutality (Wines, 2005).

One particular example widely cited by interviewees, was the result of a crises situation. In 2006, when the President and vice-President of AbM were on their way to a radio station for an interview, Durban local police arrested them. While they were held (and beaten) at the Sydenham police station (Tolsi, 2006a) a member who was present at the arrest scene, started sending SMS messages and making calls to AbM members and supporters. “Someone sent an SMS to P4 radio explaining that their guests were under arrest. This was announced on air” (Pithouse, 2006b). Within a short time a crowd of around 40 people, including AbM members and supporters, arrived outside Sydenham police station.[232] Interviewees were unsure how exactly people received the information – if over the radio, or phone call and SMS – but several doubted that this action would have been possible if not coordinated through mobile phones (AbM member 12, 2010; AbM member 20, 2010; AbM supporter 1, 2010).

Although some members saw this as a natural reaction to a crises situation, others members described that events such as this help them learn to deal with crises and organise responses.

Voice call versus SMS

As outlined in section 6.1, most AbM members described owning mobile phones with basic features (mainly voice call and SMS).[233] The vast majority of AbM members generally preferred voice calls over SMS. Some of the reasons discussed previously include language; and preference to speak. However, there are other factors

[232] A larger crowd of AbM members and Kennedy residents gathered at the Kennedy community hall, attempting to march together to Sydenham police station, but were dispersed by the police with live ammunition, tear gas, and rubber bullets (Abahlali baseMjondolo and Socio-Economic Rights Institute of South Africa (SERI), 2013).

[233] Other variations of these features include the voice mail and ‘please call me’ (PCM) services. Voice mail – according to all interviewees – is never used. For instance, one member explained that “it is useless to leave a voice mail message to an individual because they never check the message – and this also demands using their airtime” (AbM member 15, 2010). PCM, on the other hand, is often used and is revised below.

influencing this preference, which in turn affect the development of skills and capabilities.

For instance, the majority of members who use their phone for AbM related activities, stated that the preference to make a call, even if more expensive, is often made based on: the level of importance and urgency of the information to be conveyed; clarity; and the issue to be discussed. SMS is mainly used for passing on information which is not necessarily urgent (AbM member 2, 2010; AbM member 3, 2010; AbM member 4, 2010; AbM member 12, 2010; AbM member 15, 2010; AbM member 23, 2010; AbM member 30, 2010).

Calls facilitate an immediate answer and give assurance that the message is conveyed. Through voice calls, members are also able to convey messages with greater clarity. These members stated that if they need to talk with another AbM member, they would make a call if they need an immediate answer, or ask for support:

> "I prefer to call, because sometimes people don't check their message. If I talk to someone, I know that the message was received, but if I send a message, maybe something could be lost on the way, and is also about timing. If it isn't an emergency, like to set meeting then I send a SMS. It saves money" (AbM member 18, 2010).

> "When the thing needs some details, I think I need to call, and get confirmation if we are going to have some events, if it is something I need clarity on, I prefer to talk. SMS is for everything else" (AbM member 30, 2010).

Views on calls and level of importance on the subject of the call, is not only reflected on the caller's choice of tool, but on how the receiver interprets this choice. One member described:

> "Some people in the leadership, for instance, if you send them an SMS they might not even reply. If I phone them asking if he/she had received the SMS, the person would reply: yes, I did receive but I thought it was not that important; if it was important, you would call me" (AbM member 15, 2010).

Furthermore, AbM members who struggle with funds to buy airtime often means the receiver of the SMS might not have funds to reply. Generally, some members rarely

would send an SMS to certain members, especially if requires an answer. However, among some members there were a few circumstances in which they would consider sending an SMS, including the amount of funds available or airtime left on their phones:

> "I prefer to call if I have airtime, but if I notice I have to call a number of people, and if I call somebody I noticed that the airtime won't last […] I just send SMS to the people. – Can I meet you here? There is a meeting on a certain date... Usually I write the same message and sent to everyone, when for example, there is a meeting" (AbM member 3, 2010).

Apart from lack of funds and importance, there is another exception when members use SMS messages: in situations of crises when a large amount of people need to be informed in one go. In this kind of event, SMS is crucial to circulate urgent news amongst members (Chance, 2011a).[234]

The use of SMS: age, language and time

Age, language and time spent on AbM are important factors in the choice between voice call and SMS among AbM members. For instance, data collected from both interviews and participant observation shows that the majority of AbM's older members (above 40 years old) did not use SMS.

Yet, some older members, mainly those who had been with AbM for at least three years, knew how to use SMS, and used it on a regular basis. An older member, who had been involved with AbM for couple of months at the time of the interview, would always call:

> "I hate to write it [SMS]. If it's day time and I receive a message [about a meeting], I call to say that I'm coming" (AbM member 24, 2010).

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[234] One member explained that, in crisis situations such as the arrest of the President and vice-President of AbM in 2006, "as long as you have airtime, you are forwarding to everyone". Some members who received the SMS would call back, for clarity on what was happening. In a very short time after the first SMS about the arrest was sent, "there were dozens – some say hundred – people outside the police station demanding the release of the two men" (AbM member 15, 2010).

As described previously in this Chapter, language also influences SMS use, even more so for older members. According to all isiZulu and isiXhosa speakers interviewed, these languages are impractical and unwieldy for SMS use.[235] SMS written in these two languages can also be problematic for younger members. This was a recurring theme when discussing the issue of language. An older member, who has been an AbM member for years, explained:

> "I send SMS in isiZulu, because all the people I talk are Zulu. People I send SMS don't have problems to understand it in isiZulu. Young people have problems because they know how to speak, but not to write in isiZulu" (AbM member 18, 2010).

This in confirmed by a 19 year old member:

> "I usually send SMS in English. I speak isiZulu, but I don't write. isiZulu is too long and English is easier for me" (AbM member 14, 2010).

The difficulty in writing isiZulu and isiXhosa within the 160-character limitation of an SMS is often described as the reason why English – or a combination of English and isiZulu/isiXhosa – is often used among SMS users. Some members who speak both English and isiZulu – or isiXhosa – stated that if they need to send an SMS, they prefer to send it in English, because it is much shorter. These members described that they only send SMS in English to people, whom they know can speak English; and isiZulu and isiXhosa to people who cannot speak English.

However, some members admit that, sometimes, when they have to send a long SMS or urgent information to many people, they choose to write in English, even to people they know who do not speak English. One member explained that he knows that some non-English speakers would ask someone else around to translate it, and he does not

[235] Other studies on the issue of language use in South Africa, include other factors such as unavailability of predictive text software and "the high social status of English and its long- standing dominance" (Deumert and Masinyana, 2008, p.123)

feel responsible for everything. "You've done what you have to do, send the information" (AbM member 12, 2010).[236]

Generally, members using SMS explained that sometimes they attempt to shorten and cut words when writing in isiZulu or isiXhosa, but this often requires a lot of thinking, and it does not always work. One member explained that his short version of isiZulu is often unsuccessful, because frequently the recipient of his SMS has to call back to ask what he means. Hence, he thinks is always better to use English or English with isiZulu (AbM member 19, 2010). One member explained this mixture:

> "It depends who I'm sending SMS to, I usually mix English, Zulu and Xhosa. If the person who is sending the SMS is Zulu, but is sending the message in English, I answer in English. I call it 'zunglish', because it's a mix of Zulu and English. Zulu words are too long, that's why people use English words to replace big Zulu words. But now we sometimes abbreviate Zulu, but it is not easy" (AbM member 27, 2010).

"Please call me" (PCM)

A common service is the "please call me" (PCM) SMS mobile phone feature. PCM, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 4, is a free service provided by phone carriers in South Africa that allows sending a request to the recipient to "please call" the caller. Although the PCM service allows users to stay in touch by requesting a call back, there are different views about its use among AbM members.

Some members described that their choice to use PCM is based on the receiver's funds. One member explained that he uses PCM to researchers – usually to the academics and foreign researchers – because, according to him: "they have plenty of funds to use airtime" (AbM member 20, 2010).

Another unemployed member described her PCM use:

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[236] One non-English speaking member confirmed that she would ask someone to translate English messages (AbM member 22, 2010). Another non-English speaking member explains that even though she is not able to speak, she still prefers to write an SMS in English. According to her, she prefers to speak isiZulu, but to write in English because is shorter and easier. She believes that other isiZulu speakers would understand her SMS with her version of English – often mixed with isiZulu words (AbM member 10, 2010).

> "I do use to certain people who I know will call me, because on CELL C[237] you can use 7 free please call me for a day. If I don't have airtime and someone gives me a please call, I would just give them a please call back. Even if I got airtime and I know... I don't need to use my airtime if it's unnecessary" (AbM member 1, 2010).

When inquired about what kind of people in AbM she would send a PCM, she replied:

> "In a emergency, I would send – as an example – if I'm really suffering and it's very urgent and I need to speak to someone; or if I need advice I just give him [AbM supporter 1] a please call. I know that if I give him 2 please call he will know it's urgent and so he will definitely call me back. That's the only person that I would usually send; and this lady that is sponsoring the community; if I send her a please call she always calls me" (AbM member 1, 2010).

Some members, who sent PCM messages to academics, or other AbM supporters, would not do so with AbM members. PCM use among these members has an implicit code of practice. These members know that PCM use must respect certain rules; otherwise the sender cannot expect to receive a call back. Members recognize that, limited funds mean that they cannot communicate as much as they wish, but this works both ways. Among these members there is a greater understanding that they all struggle with funds, and for this reason, PCM are only used for emergency situations or for important issues to be discussed. Common reasons given by these members to avoid using PCMs were fairness and only using it as a last resort in an emergency, thus avoiding PCMs to signal that it is important when it is used (AbM member 10, 2010; AbM member 14, 2010; AbM member 18, 2010; AbM member 20, 2010; AbM member 21, 2010; AbM member 25, 2010; AbM member 26, 2010).[238]

Lastly, other kinds of PCM usage among AbM members can provide an insight into the dynamics of relationships. PCM usage reinforced some of the issues that will be described next (under section 6.4), such as: dependency, expectation, views on role and available resources.

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[237] Cell C is one of the biggest mobile phone service provider in South Africa.

[238] There is one exception in which PCM – or beep (miss call) – is widely used: The Secretary General and President of AbM, who are assumed to be in the office and can call back from the landline, at no personal cost.

Using mobile tools

Limited funds among AbM members, has forced some individuals to created new ways to communicate and organise through mobile phones. Some members described systems and pre-arranged agreements which helps them to spend less on airtime.

For members who do not spend their airtime on AbM related activities, some operate as receivers and disseminators of information. For example, one member of the Joe Slovo informal settlement explained that she acts as a hub in her community:

> "I go door to door, but I don't use my phone for these activities. I receive calls from [AbM member 20] and [AbM member 17], updating me on things and asking me to tell people around in the community" (AbM member 16, 2010).

This way of integrating mobile phones into face-to-face and other media networks are an important aspect of AbM communication. Other members, for instance, use their mobile phones to share information with the AbM office, which then operates as a hub passing on relevant information to other branches, and members. One member gave the following example; others related similar stories to the same effect:

> "most of the time you cannot be together, but we need to talk all the time. Things are happening every day all the time, like rent going up, electricity, and we need to share the information. For example now [AbM member 15] is in the office and I am at home watching TV, so if I see something on TV, and I know in the office there is no TV, I just send a please call me to [AbM member 15] and she calls me back and I tell her what I saw in the news – and she starts to make calls. But it's not all the time. Communication is about updating each other" (AbM member 21, 2010).

Apart from sharing information, some members created systems to communicate through mobile phones using less of their airtime. A member described how he manages different mobile phone SIM cards and uses them according to the receiver's phone carrier (calls to the same phone carrier cost less) (AbM member 20, 2010). Another member weighs up the cost between SMS and to make a call. Because of the limitation of characters for an SMS – and he can only write in isiZulu – he prefers to make a call. He calculates how long he would need – in seconds – to convey his

message, practises and works out shorter sentences to convey the message (AbM member 25).

6.4 Sense of agency

Sense of agency is affected by a number of aspects identified in this Chapter.

Some members' accounts provided evidence of factors which might have motivated a sense of agency, even before the creation of AbM. As discussed in the section 6.1, some members described that when they moved to informal settlements, they felt compelled to join local community committees or ANC branches. According to them, the circumstances and conditions in which they were living in drove them to get involved in organisations, which they believed could result in development and provision of services to their informal settlements.

Yet, in some particular cases, associations have also led to anger and disillusionment with political parties, and government officials' promises. These feelings represent some of the reasons given by a few members that motivated them to create – or join – AbM. These members perceived AbM as a platform to express their discontent with government structures and policies, and to demand their basic rights.

Other members, however, portrayed a different sense of agency. Simply joining AbM and taking part in some activities signifies their sense of agency. For instance, the decision to join AbM came as a response to problems which directly affected their lives, such as evictions, corruption, threats, and adverse living conditions. Joining AbM was an opportunity to get help.

The social context was cited by all interviewees as an important aspect in motivating them to act – or developing a sense of agency. Shared experiences within the

collective reinforced individual solidarity, responsibility, and self-confidence.[239] These are reviewed next.

6.4.1 Solidarity and the creation of bonds

Some members talked about, feelings of trust and commitment. These members demonstrated stronger social bonds among themselves. They often described that AbM "comrades" help them to keep going, and are constantly pushing and supporting each other to face their problems. These members often described AbM "comrades" as family. One AbM supporter described experiencing a feeling of a congregation, of people looking after each other. This supporter recounts that AbM members – mostly the leadership – would be present at funerals, weddings, birth of a child, or all major events in the life of their "comrades".[240]

A common narrative collected in interviews included accounts of AbM not only representing the members, but that within AbM members feel as equals and what matters is to fight together against their common foes. These members, for instance, stated that people from different political parties and with different views, all have a place within AbM. Differences, according to many interviewees, did not prevent members from having their voice within AbM.[241] One member, for instance, described that she is not only part of AbM, but AbM is part of her (AbM member 15, 2010). Another member stated that the discussions and concerns raised within AbM were the same as his own:

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[239] While solidarity and responsibility are discussed here, individual self-confidence is reviewed through the analysis of action (political voice) and reflection, in this Chapter.

[240] According to an this AbM supporter, the social bonds among members also impacts on their use of mobile phones, in these kinds of circumstances – *e.g.* congratulate; express solidarity. He gives an example of when his child was born. According to him, he got more SMSs and calls from AbM members than from his other friends. He thinks there is a lot of emotional support among some members, and it is not always about politics, but they also talk about family, friends, and life (AbM supporter 1, 2010).

[241] One member described this in the following way: "I think it is very important because, all the time comrades have got different views of what is Abahlali about, or how Abahlali can achieve their goal. So we need to be there all the time, then you can even just put your input. I can even put my input as well, my idea [...] I can put my input, I can receive from my comrades, find new ideas" (AbM member 26, 2010).

> "Because they were talking about the things that I was asking myself: where is the platform for us to talk really about these things? The agenda that Abahlali brings, made me feel like this the right place for me to be" (AbM member 20, 2010).

Yet, in the case of AbM, solidarity and the creation of bonds were not a straightforward process. For instance, as observed during visits and meetings in informal settlements and described by interviewees, there are different views on the ways and means to achieve development; different interests (individual versus the collective); and differences in the ability or willingness to get involved in organisations such as AbM.

Descriptions and understandings of what 'community' means also differ. Although all interviewees referred to the informal settlement they live in as a community, they have different perceptions and relationships to what they call 'community', including different levels of engagement and bonds within these communities.[242]

As previously described in this Chapter, some members described that prior to their engagement with AbM they were feeling detached from the community. They had little or no relationship with other residents and were unaware that these residents had similar needs and were experiencing the same hardship. For these members, the lack of social cohesion meant limited solidarity and support.

Yet, some members were able to develop solidarity after engaging with AbM. One member described her relationship with her community, before AbM, and what has changed since she joined AbM:

> "I am more involved with the community, whereas before I would sit back and stay at home (…) I didn't go anywhere. But now after joined Abahlali we are more involved, we know more people which we didn't know before, when we were mostly at home. You learn about their problems; you learn a lot" (AbM member 8, 2010).

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[242] One member who lived in a particular settlement all her life described that in her community there are people from different places, who moved there looking for jobs. Their relationship, she said, with the community is different from hers, who was born and raised there. She felt attached to that community, while these new or transient residents do not share the same concerns, or are less attached to the place (AbM member 11, 2010).

The solidarity expressed by these members is often a result of the solidarity they received within AbM. This was often observed in the descriptions of involvement and a sense of gratitude towards AbM.[243] These members also showed their solidarity towards other AbM members – not necessarily from their own informal settlements – by going to court hearings to support members.[244] These members saw themselves as being welcomed to share their views and concerns within AbM:

> "They welcome anyone to speak, if you have important things to say, they welcome us to speak" (AbM member 8, 2010).
>
> "You can say whatever you want, your feelings, just like everybody else" (AbM member 5, 2010).

Some interviewees described a sense of great trust and belief that AbM would support them.[245] These members described that AbM has offered support to them, including legal support, involving the media, as well as people and organisations.[246] Although these members stated that they felt empowered and were in a better situation than

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[243] An example of this is the description of one member: "After all the help they have given to us, I have to show my respect and be at the meetings. I cannot have an attitude… they help me and now I sit back. I've got nothing to worry. If something else rise up, I know they will assist me again" (AbM member 6, 2010).

[244] Some members recounted joining forces with other members to demand the release of the AbM President and vice-President from the police station in 2006. One particular event, which mobilized some members, was the attacks in Kennedy, in 2009. Some members interviewed stated having been strongly affected by the event. Many of them showed their solidarity by calling the victims, offering words of encouragement and help. One member explained that when she heard about the attack, she immediately went to Kennedy to see how she could help and find out what was happening. Since then, she attended every court hearing of the Kennedy 12, even if that meant taking time off work (AbM member 16, 2010).

[245] When asked what would they do if threatened – *e.g.* by the police, or local chief – the most common answer was that they would go to their local AbM committee leader or get in contact with AbM office directly. One member described the feeling thus: "There is no fear, there is peace. We are in a level where we got the upper hand, no one can point fingers at us. Because we know we got our backs covered, our strength comes from behind" (AbM member 6, 2010). When receiving threats over the phone, a member called the president of AbM for help. When I inquired if she had or would call the police, she replied: "We can't trust this Pinetown police […] Abahlali can help us more than the police. […] If I'm threatened again, I won't bother calling the police, it's a waste of time, I'll rather call Abahlali" (AbM member 8, 2010).

[246] When, for example, questioned about AbM's reaction after the attacks at Kennedy, AbM was seen by these members as a providing the support for the twelve accused men. According to some members interviewed, AbM was helping the accused men by providing lawyers, funds and helping their families. For one member, AbM "stood strong and never failed them" (AbM member 5, 2010).

before, there was a level of dependency on the organisation, especially on certain members (see section 6.4.3).

Other members, however, described feeling solidarity towards shack dwellers from other informal settlements who are not members of AbM. According to the these members, being involved in AbM made them realize that "suffering" is wide-spread and they need to support anyone in need of help. One member explained:

> "Before I joined Abahlali I didn't have much interest in the community as a whole.[247] I had interest in my own community – around me – but now is broader, I think about other communities like Pinetown, Kennedy Road..." (AbM member 7, 2010).

Moreover, for these members, their "leadership goes beyond movement activities", and included the needs of other communities and shack dwellers. One member gave following example: "if I had information on how to grow *Mealies* [corn] I could share it with my community" (AbM member 7, 2010).

Solidarity with the movement from external supporters seemed to have inspired some AbM members. One member explained that he was impressed to see some academics come to his shack, bring their laptops and spend hours typing his statements. According to him there was no personal gain, only true collaboration. These were professional people who were willing to share their expertise and support AbM (AbM member 12, 2010).

A few of these members used their personal airtime to express their solidarity towards other members and shack dwellers. Although, overall members still prefer to do this face-to-face, mobile phone has been used to reinforce individual bonds within AbM (see discussion next).

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[247] When he says "community as a whole" he refers to all shack dwellers living in informal settlements.

Praising and solidarity through mobile phones

Data from interviews and participant observation shows that, with the exception of a few members, mobile phone calls or SMS, were rarely used for socialization amongst AbM members. AbM members have generally used their phones for socializing, mainly with family and friends. Although, mobile phones are used for "practical things", there are a few examples in which some members socialize, praise, acknowledge and express solidarity over the phone.[248]

A couple of members were sending messages of praise and acknowledgement as motivational tools. These SMSs carried inspirational messages. One young member, who had recently joined AbM, described a SMS she has received from one of these members, and the impact it had on her:

> "I received an SMS from [AbM member 12] congratulating me on my good job with the march, saying that I was a sort of ambassador, that I was a good example for the movement, the young generation. I kept that message; it was like a gift to me" (AbM member 13, 2010).

Some members explained that these kinds of messages are sent by one or two leaders only, and that it is not a common practice. Most members agreed that this practice came about from their exchange with academics and other AbM supporters. Some members described that, when the movement started, they would receive SMS messages or calls from academics, congratulating them on a march, a talk, or other events. The positive impact on individual's self-confidence was seen as important. One

[248] Just before leaving South Africa, I received a couple of SMSes where members complimented on my work, or expressed sadness with my departure. One SMS received read: "Oh. Dear comrade! You have been such a wonderful friend, an informative and a deligent caring person. Ur solidarity with the marginalised is remarkably appreciated u even signed our petishn abt masangweni kids killing! Was hoping u will pay me a vizit b4 u leave but nevertheless yr legacy is left behind c u soon. Bon voyage dear Mbali. Salute!" (AbM member 30, 2010).

member stated that, because of his leadership position within the movement, a message from him seems to have an inspirational effect.[249]

Lastly, expressing solidarity and support appears to be the main reason for mobile phone use for socialising. Some members would send or received SMS messages or calls of support in times of hardship, such as evictions, police brutality, bereavements, and supporting people in legal proceedings.

Displays of solidarity were particular common following the Kennedy attack in 2009, which generated a large number of calls and SMS from AbM members and supporters nationally and internationally. One member, who was also a victim of the attacks, recalled that he received calls and SMS of support following the attacks. Before the attacks, he explained, it was not so common to receive this kind of support call or SMS, because everything was basically face-to-face (AbM member 26, 2010). Another member, also a victim of the attacks, described that "some comrades, even from outside Durban, would call them [the victims] to send some solitary messages" (AbM member 15, 2010).

A new and essential way of socializing developed among the victims, caused by the circumstances; including geographic displacement; isolation; post-traumatic stress; and the need for financial and psychological support. Mobile phones provided an important channel of communication.

6.4.2 Responsibility and commitment

To a large number of members interviewed, responsibility and commitment are two important aspects affecting their sense of agency. Members described that it is important to take part in all AbM activities, even when there might be competing

[249] In his own words: "to recognize people strength, capabilities […] I think it is important. […] I always think that [a message from him] could have a serious impact, positive, things that people are capable of must be supported. I know my position means a lot, to encourage and promote certain values, the fact that it comes from me, I know, it may add value to what a person might not have" (AbM member 12, 2010).

personal priorities, which could prevent their participation.[250] AbM youth members also described a sense of responsibility towards the future of the organisation.[251]

Aspects of AbM's structure reinforce this feeling of responsibility upon some members, more than others. For instance, AbM executive meetings – where discussions happen at the organisational level, instead of local level – are not accessible to all members. For this reason, representative members from each AbM branch have the duty to attend, be informed, pass on to their communities information or decisions made, and/or represent the interests of these communities within those meetings.[252]

The sense of responsibility was an obvious feature during meetings, even when some members could not attend, "apologies" for absence were given. Members who were absent without an apology, unless there were good reasons for the absence, were not entitled to contest decisions made during that meeting.[253]

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[250] One self-employed member, who supports a family of six, stated: "I never missed any activities, I'd rather take the day off work to participate, because this is our cause, it is what we are fighting for. Even after I left Kennedy road I go to the activities" (AbM member 22, 2010). One member from a rural area explained that people believed in him and that he felt he has to visit them. Although travel between villages in the rural areas is difficult, time consuming, and expensive, he thinks that he needs to be constantly in touch with the people from these different villages. He explained that he had not visited some villages for a few weeks, and he thinks this is a problem. "I'm planning to come and visit some communities now, even the far away ones. Because I feel there is a gap now between me and the communities. I know that if they don't see a leader, they became demotivated" (AbM member 30, 2010).

[251] A youth member explained: "we all have responsibilities, specially us the young ones, we need to always be there. We know that someday [AbM member 12] or [AbM member 3] won't be there but the movement will be there; it will need us to represent it. You are the future of the organisation, that is a big responsibility you carry" (AbM member 21, 2010).

[252] One member explained that it is her responsibility to go to the AbM office meetings, to update other members on what she is doing, and what is the situation at the community. She also explained that when there is a meeting at the office, with "committee members" only, and a proposal or a decision is taken, she has to go back to her community and present the proposal or discuss the decision. She thinks that committee members have to represent the communities' wishes, when taking part in those decisions. "The leader still have to bring it back and ask what the community thinks about it, do they approve it? That's why is important for the community to voice their opinion. We need to know what you need, what is inside you" (AbM member 1, 2010).

[253] As one member described: "if you are not taking part in meetings, it is your fault, and you cannot complain that things were decided without your knowledge. You have to be present!" (AbM member 15, 2010).

Beyond the pressure exerted by AbM's structure, some members frequently described a sense of gratitude towards AbM.[254] This gratitude was often associated with feelings of solidarity. Solidarity, quite often was associated with a sense of responsibility. These members often referred to themselves as "leaders with responsibilities" to help members, neighbours, and the community. The experience acquired through engagement with AbM changed these members' perception of what a leadership role means:

> "Inside Abahlali we have a different experience, […before being a leader] I was thinking just that you are leading people – everyone here – have to hear from you. But I experienced that no, to be a leader is just a name, is the people leading you, you know. It is just a name, you are a leader, the people – like our vice-President, used to say that: how you can say thank you when people are electing you? Those people are saying they are giving you the responsibility to do that, you are not working for money, you are working for the community. They are your bosses, but they won't pay you. Everyone will be paid when we get our houses" (AbM member 14, 2010).

A few of these members described that their sense of responsibility came from being responsible for a number of activities within AbM. One member from Kennedy described that at the beginning, just after the creation of AbM and even before she held any position, she was very active in meetings, participating, and giving her views. The more she became engaged, the more tasks she led and got involved in (AbM member 15, 2010).

Many members described that the more they got involved in AbM, and created bonds within the organisation and its members, the more they felt obliged to lead and support AbM activities. One member described that once she became responsible for speaking for AbM, and had her mobile number published on press releases, she had to deal with a huge demand of calls on her mobile phone:

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[254] One member, elaborated: "Because Abahlali has shown me directions so I have to show some responsibility, so that's why I used to go very promptly to all the meetings. I used to sit there and used to hear what was happening in other communities. I used to know, and get more involved with it" (AbM member 1, 2010).

> "Because my number was there, and there was a demand, I felt an urge to know more, to be more involved. Basically being there at Abahlali website, made a very big difference. People in South Africa, people outside of South Africa started calling me, to know more, asking me questions, and that's when I felt: No, I have a responsibility" (AbM member 1, 2010).

Members' commitment to AbM inspired the need to familiarise themselves with some computer and internet tools, in order to support AbM's activities and keep links with AbM's network of supporters.[255]

Beyond various degrees of involvement in activities and the acquisition of skills, some members expressed their perceived responsibility in preserving and protecting AbM's image. One member explained that, unlike before, now as part of AbM she feels that she has to find ways to help someone in need, whether she likes them or not:

> "You are also not thinking just about yourself but about the image of the organisation. A person won't say, [AbM member 15] has failed me, he/she will say Abahlali has failed me. When a person comes to me, he or she is going to Abahlali. I am a representative of Abahlali" (AbM member 15, 2010).

Some members described events and situations in which they have taken personal risks to stand up for what they believe in. These AbM members saw themselves as part of social movement, a collective. There are a number of aspects reinforcing some members' commitment to the "struggle", including a perception of great injustices; solidarity with others; and the dynamics of working together.[256]

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[255] This closely resembles the experience of Chiapan NGOs after the Zapatista uprising. Based on interviews for my master thesis, most local NGOs in Chiapas, Mexico, started to demand and acquire access to the internet to support the Zapatista network with information, to expose human rights abuses perpetrated by the Mexican Government and paramilitary groups in Chiapas (Copello, 2006).

[256] A member explained that before he joined AbM, he would never argue or disagree with the police. But since he joined AbM he often confronts the police, and gets harassed and brutalized. When inquired about why he now stands up to the police, he stated:

"Because now I'm on the spot, I'm on the field, I'm fighting and defending the rights of myself and my community. I live it, its in my vein, Before I didn't care much, I cared about myself, but now in most brutality and confrontation it happens by wanting to defend the dignity and the rights of my own people" (AbM member 7, 2010).

Yet, responsibility and commitment comes at a cost. For AbM members, the added financial burden to participate might include cost of transportation and communication. Their sense of agency can be constrained by their resources.[257]

For some members, the level of commitment and responsibility towards AbM and its members often goes beyond their own personal resources as well as emotional strength. Some interviewees found their responsibilities could become overwhelming. Yet, they often perceived it as their duty:

> "I don't feel that people demand more from me, because if they appointed me is because they trust me, and I have also committed myself to help whenever I can" (AbM member 25, 2010).

6.4.3 Expectations and dependency

As data collected suggests, some members seem to have extra pressure to act, as a result of expectations from and dependency on other members and shack dwellers.

Some of the members interviewed and as observed of other members on fieldwork – mainly from Zulu and Xhosa ethnic background – talked about "going to the leader" when they needed support. The support required might relate to dealing with evictions; arguments and fights among residents of an informal settlement; threats from local chiefs, police, and government officials; and corruption. These members saw these as issues that demanded the intervention of their local leader, often meaning, AbM intervention and support.

However, while these members described how important it is to have the support of AbM's leadership, demands and expectations can be overwhelming to particular

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[257] A member elaborated this point: "People need me, so I must call. It touches me. If a person sending a please call, means that person is hopping I will call, as a leader. If I don't call, it means I'm no longer concerned with the struggle. Because I'm always concerned with the struggle. Each and every member is a pillar of my struggle. Their struggle is my struggle" (AbM member 30, 2010). Another member stated it this way: "all the time I receive calls and it is too much, that's why we call it a struggle, because everything is a struggle, like to make calls or to have to wake up at one o'clock in the morning to answer the calls, but we all accept our work. It is something we are not upset about, it is something that we always worry about, but that is why is we call it the struggle" (AbM member 21, 2010).

members, often leaders. Leaders stated that the demands frequently go beyond AbM remit.

Receivers of these demands stated that other members or residents of informal settlements, trusted them to support the community in any way they can. It is unclear, from the data collected, why these members endure this role, even when it comes at a high cost to them. Some interviewees pointed to their sense of solidarity and commitment to the "suffering" of their people. In a few cases, the status of leader, or the way a leader presents him/herself reinforced the dependency of community residents and some AbM members:

> "some see me as a very intelligent person while before people would see me as a person with negative ideas, but now they see me as a leader. Some even see me as an international leader, because I've been to America and other places" (AbM member 30, 2010).

I was able to observed some community and personal issues becoming the responsibility of particular leaders. Issues such as death of a community resident, domestic violence, health (*e.g.* calling an ambulance, finding a doctor), and disputes between neighbours, were among some of the problems dealt with by these leaders. Although issues such as these could be considered as expected demands of marginalised communities from a leader, the expectations and assumptions about the responsibilities and resources that a leader possess, seemed unrealistic. As one leader explained:

> "once you are elected for a committee, not only Abahlali, at the local level; once you become a committee member then you are in an advantage situation, in people's mind you are paid to be there, therefore, bringing every kind of stress on you is appropriate." He goes on to say that "poor people really need help, and if you are in a [community] committee, they think you get paid for that. That is for everyone. So, it is not just trust. It's your role, that's the normal thinking" (AbM member 12, 2010).

In a few circumstance, some of these leaders described having contributed to pay for food or contacted supporters to aid members or residents in need. On a few occasions,

I witnessed some leaders giving their own money to pay for the transportation of members to an AbM meeting.

Some AbM members felt obliged to use their personal airtime to aid members and residents.[258] Data collected during fieldwork shows that the receivers of these demands (and expectations) – leaders or not – have experienced a major increase in their airtime expenditure, with a large part of that dedicated to AbM related activities.[259] Part of this cost increase came as a result of some members' role as a hub between communities and AbM, however, a considerable amount of the cost was created by community, and residents' demands.[260]

One member from Kennedy described how overwhelmed she felt with the demands on her phone, until the point she started ignoring most PCM messages. According to her, people would send PCM for any reason, even for things they could manage by themselves. Now, because she "told them off", most AbM members no longer send PCM messages or use missed calls, unless there is a good reason for it. When asked if maybe, people needed moral support to deal with issues, she explained that in the movement they encourage communities to do things for themselves (AbM member 15, 2010).

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[258] For instance, one member explained the effect of the pressure these demands had on her mobile phone: "Because of the work I was doing for Abahlali, I need the phone very badly." Although unemployed and struggling to support herself and her family, she still felt obliged to find ways to buy airtime in order to avail herself to the community: "If I have to make a call to the lawyer; if the community has a problem; if I have to find out something from Abahlali office, for the whole community, I will call them" (AbM member 1, 2010). Another member recalled that since she joined the movement, she noticed she needs her phone always with her. She said that it is a big problem if someone tried to reach her and she is not available. According to her, friends can live without her, but not AbM (AbM member 15, 2010). Only four other members with high positions in the movement interviewed described that at times they choose to ignore demands which they consider them unimportant.

[259] A member from Pemary Ridge informal settlement explained that when it comes to crises in the community, such as problems with shack lords or something more serious, people would go to him, and he would use his phone to help them by calling lawyers and other AbM members (AbM member 7, 2010).

[260] A member from Motala Heights informal settlement described that his position requires him to use his personal mobile phone more often. According to this member, other AbM members would often send him a 'please call me' message, because members would 'assume' that, since he is a leader, he must have resources; and he felt obliged to call back. Sometimes this member received calls from people in isolated areas, requiring help and protection of the movement (AbM member 4, 2010).

However, this approach has not been always successful, and this problem is particularly acute for a leader in a high position in AbM.[261] According to one member, a title of leader – such as the title of President of AbM – means that one has to provide, and people are unaware of the pressure placed upon this person (AbM member 12, 2010).

However, it is not only shack dwellers and residents who showed dependency on some leaders (with or without titles, see further analysis in Chapter 7). Some of the leaders, who had responsibilities and received demands from their communities, have demonstrated a certain level of expectation and dependency on other leaders who were more involved at AbM's organisational level – this often involved members elected for executive positions. Although not obvious from interviews, observation of AbM executive meetings, for instance, showed that leaders involved at the organisational level demonstrated a stronger sense of agency by often volunteering themselves to take responsibility for some activities, while other leaders and members kept quiet.[262]

Leaders who showed dependency on others, did so in particular circumstances, such as leading activities or tasks at the organisational level – *e.g.* filing a request for a march; dealing with government officials; or simply to be responsible for finding transportation for a march. In these situations, these leaders would not take the

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[261] One member explained that most members of the movement presume that he, as the President, either has a salary, or has enough money to support himself. The expectations and demands of community members placed an additional heavy financial (and psychological) burden on him with his phone bill frequently reaching ZAR 3.000/month (AbM member 12, 2010). Approximately GBP £229, as converted on 24 Nov 2011.

[262] One member, present at one of these meetings, described that some people were responsible for two tasks, and there were some people who did not have any task, and did not take the initiative. She explained that she volunteered for one task, before they pushed her to other things. She described that:

"In life, there are people who makes things happen, and there are people who waits to see if things are happening; and there are people who doesn't even bother whether its daylight or it's dark or what. All these people are within the movement, but to make things happen it only took for those people to make things happen. You may find that, out of the 100, you may see that the people who are part of the category of who make things happen are only 5. So it obviously it puts pressure on them. That is something that no one can change it, it's nature of life" (AbM member 15, 2010).

initiative and be responsible for some tasks, and instinctively expect other leaders to lead.

6.5 Reflection

Data of AbM's social context, resources, and sense of agency above identified a number of factors contributing to the process of developing a political voice. This section describes the impact of these factors on individual reflection. Here I also include self-reported emotions, feelings, and reasoning which leads to action.

Reflection was identified in the collected data– *i.e.* interviews and participant observation – and the analysis of material published by AbM (*e.g.* publications, speeches and videos), including references to "living politics", and Abahlalism. AbM's Living Learning booklet (Figlan *et al.*, 2009), for instance, described the realization and conceptualizations of marginalisation by some individuals. In the Living Learning booklet members explored the source of their marginalisation, by reflecting on their personal background (similar to the description contained in section 6.1). These aspects, as well as other examples of reflection, are presented next.

6.5.1 Reflecting on marginalisation

The data contained a number of examples of individual members reflecting on the source of their marginalisation. One member gave an example of the effect of the culture of silence on shack dwellers, although he referred to Freire's concept as "critical silence":

> "People are used to what Paulo Freire calls critical silent. They see that something is not going right, but they will keep quiet. So and so will complain for us… who are we to complain? Who are we to speak about those things? Even if you tell them, there is a program on the radio and TV about land issues, just call and say your problems in your own areas. And the people say: who am I to call the radio station? That is critical silence, they are submerged into that critical silence according to Paulo Freire" (AbM member 30, 2010).

Although most AbM members experienced the Apartheid system, only a few members have engaged politically before and/or after the end of apartheid.

Generally, interviewees' views on what can be associated with the culture of silence included issues such as: corruption, fear and coercion by local chiefs (exercised through, or enforced by, police and local councillors), empty promises, and disillusion with their "unchanged" poverty. Members, involved in community development committees (CDCs), described their discontent with government and party politics, and the realization of top down structures that disregard their needs and views, and only serve to benefit the ones in power (see this Chapter, section 6.1.2). However, some members asked deeper questions and had a deeper understanding of the structural and psychological aspects of their marginalisation. In the Living Learning booklet, for instance, a member described this in the following way:

> "[W]e see quite big systems (education, religion, economy, government, values, and so on) that are connected into overall project of oppression of the people to favour the rich oppressors" (Figlan *et al.*, 2009, p.39).
>
> "Our philosophy, as the oppressed people is that we need to fight our struggle and fight this oppression, because oppression is a kind of education that is in the minds of the people, put in the minds of the people. So we need to be there to organise and motivate people, to fight against oppression. We need to be there physically, so that we motivate people to say something, if they see our faces, our actions, if they hear us singing songs, they get motivated, and they then help their mind. We are oppressed, we need to be freed" (AbM member 30, 2010).

These members, for instance, questioned the celebration of Freedom Day[263], and the realization that they were asked to celebrate, whilst to them nothing really has changed. They questioned what it means to be 'free'.[264]

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[263] Freedom Day is a public holiday, celebrated on 27 April, which commemorates the first post-apartheid elections held on that day in 1994.

[264] In the Living Learning booklet a member stated: "We do not just accept what is presented to us but we must question it. It is the same with 'Freedom Day': the people are told, 'celebrate, you are free' – but is it true? We must question this. Real freedom is not something that can be imposed on a person from outside, it can only be something learned from within" (Figlan *et al.*, 2009, p.24).

These members also referred to cultural aspects reinforcing the culture of silence, which demanded recognizing and learning how to deal with it. An example of this was the gender differences among shack dwellers described by members. According to one member, although AbM supports equality and fights any kind of aggression or domination over women, there was a deeper feeling of subjugation in many women's minds.[265] According to this member, once she became "broad minded" she had to also learn how to motivate other women to stand up for their rights. According to her: "it's not only up to AbM", women need to learn how to speak up (AbM member 1, 2010).

When looking back to their upbringing, some members started reflecting on their education and how some organisations might have instilled a culture of silence. According to some members, as children and teenagers, many organisations in which they were brought up focused on preparing and raising people to comply and not defy the system:

> "we can now look back and question what was the real point of something like the Scout Promise to be faithful and loyal (to our country *etc.*) – part of it was definitely part of a way of teaching meant to produce 'good boys', who are obedient and not troublemakers!" (Figlan *et al.*, 2009).

In another quote from the Living Learning booklet, a member stated:

> "We see that education is mostly used to control people and keep power for the powerful – but we can disrupt this. This requires us to analyse what kind of education is going on – is it there to make us 'good boys and girls' or is it helping to make us question things and make that part of our struggle to change the world?" (Figlan *et al.*, 2009, p. 20).

Some members, more than others, started to critically reflect on the role of religious institutions in maintaining a culture of silence.

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[265] Feelings of subjugation are not widely stated by AbM members. However, based on observations of actions and talks during my fieldwork, it was possible to see a continuous attempt by some AbM members to raise women's morale within the organisation.

6.5.2 Understanding the role of religion

Religion, faith, and religious institutions play an important role in AbM. Some members described the effect of religious teaching on shack dwellers as perpetuating shack dwellers' marginalisation. Examples included the association of suffering as "God's will". A few members described that shack dwellers often say that "God made the world as it is", and they are meant to suffer because of that. According to these members, many shack dwellers feel unable to change their situation, and this is why many remain inactive, and silent (AbM member 30, 2010; Figlan *et al.*, 2009).

These members explained that some religious people are suspicious about people "rising up" and use the name of God to "keep the poor on their place". In the Living Learning booklet, a member told following illustrative anecdote:

> "I was listening to a priest preaching on the radio the other day. I was impressed with what he was saying, but then he said that 'these toyi-toyi'ing people I see on TV have forgotten God!' The implication of this sort of teaching is that God made us to be poor and that we should not resist injustice but accept it" (Figlan *et al.*, 2009, p.66).

However, other members did not recognise the use of religion and religious institutions to maintain marginalisation.[266] Overall, there was no articulation of dissatisfaction or views on how religion was or could be used to marginalise them.[267]

Yet, the religious views of some members were an important factor to mobilize other members to engage in "the struggle". A prominent example of that are AbM's meetings at local and organisational levels. As described above, praying and singing songs of worship act as both: therapy and motivation. During meetings, members talked about God watching over the poor, and asked for God's protection and support

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[266] Apart from two members who described themselves as not having received any support from their local church in time of crises.

[267] Although AbM members described not having had the support of local churches, some South African church leaders were very important in drawing attention to the media to AbM's 'struggle (see Chapter 5).

for their “struggle”. One member, who is also a reverend, explained why this is important:

> “It is a way of motivating people. Sometimes if we can talk about the struggle, some of them are traumatized, some are depressed, so if we give them a time to sing and pray, that is a way to therapy or counselling sometimes. And, it is also a way of motivating them, and it is a way to communicate with their own God, and they should feel that God is part of the struggle, God loves them, but God is against oppression. Most of the time the oppression, apartheid, discrimination were propagated through religion, domesticating people … Paulo Freire used to say that education is not neutral. So by conscientizing them we also ask God, and we want them to see that God is with them and God is against oppression, any kind of oppression. God is against discrimination; it is not that God loves them when they are oppressed… Before we were told that we should now accept what has been decided for us by God, it is our fate. Now, as we preach, as we pray, as we sing, we also sing songs that give us motivation. Songs that are about reflecting on what our sufferings are. We want to open our minds, we sing those songs. We are selective, even in songs” (AbM member 30, 2010).

Although the majority of members did not critically reflect on religion as the members cited above, they have certainly benefited from the motivational aspect of the religious practice inside AbM. In the words of a member:

> “in our culture we believe that we can not do anything without calling God or asking God to be with us. It has an impact in the group and even if you don’t believe in the praying, it touches you, brings people together” (AbM member 29, 2010).

6.5.3 Self-confidence

Self-confidence emerged as an important aspect in several accounts cited previously in this Chapter. Through the AbM organisational stance on self-determination, for instance, some members were encouraged to learn from one another, develop skills, autonomy and self-confidence, without being ‘guided’ by the external experts. A sense of self-confidence was often observed in collective processes (“being united”) within AbM (see sections 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4 of this Chapter). This was observed through some members’ attitudes, actions and speech when together with other members in events such as marches, celebrations, elections, and camps.

The feeling of increased self-confidence since joining AbM was a common feature of interviewee responses. Some members, for instance, gave accounts of how confident they felt when facing people who threatened them:

> "I could turn to anyone and remind [them] I have rights, a voice to be heard, and we can even practice our walking out, marching out, to let the government know – which talk louder than words. We got a right of voice" (AbM member 5, 2010).

Some members described feelings of being empowered to join marches and show their anger. However, through participant observation, I observed that these same members tended to only demonstrate being self-confident when together with other AbM members, or when discussing what they have achieved through AbM.[268] This was often observed through descriptions of "having their back covered" and the power of standing together.

Other members, nonetheless, described feeling self-confident when collaborating with experts, such as researchers and academics. This was observed when these members inquired about the nature of the research and how the researcher (and research) would contribute to AbM in exchange of the time and resources provided by AbM (*e.g.* translation in meetings; time given for interviews). By contributions, these AbM members did not mean funds or donations, but made clear that, to them, these were "exchanges", and both sides should benefit. According to some members, this could be done by sharing findings, help writing a report for the website; sharing skills and knowledge.

In some cases, these members gave accounts of dealing with government officials "at the same level", that is feeling equal to them, and "telling lawyers what to do". One member explained how this process affected her:

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[268] Referring to people – who were not shack dwellers – who managed to buy Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) houses through corrupt dealings, a member stated: "There are some changes in my life since I joined Abahlali. Initially as these new people came they didn't treat us like people, because we lived in shacks. But after we joined Abahlali, and Abahlali people talked to them, they started to treat us like people, they stopped insulting us. I can specify anything that has changed in my life, but my life is better ever since I joined Abahlali. And we are still fighting for our cause" (AbM member 16, 2010).

> "In my life, Abahlali was a schooling career for me. Like, I'm learning so much, it's opening more doors each day, giving me more direction and focus in a lot of angles. Like, I learned a lot about law; I can stand up like a lawyer, and people sometimes think I'm a lawyer. (…) You know exactly what to say to the lawyer, you can even teach a lawyer things. People get surprised that sometimes I tell the lawyers what to do" (AbM member 1, 2010).

Frequently, members made comparisons between the way they used to think and feel, and what had changed since they joined AbM.[269] These members described that before AbM they used to be "scared to speak up", for instance, against the police.[270] Some members claimed to have learned how to speak in public (see section 6.3.1). Moreover, some claimed that now they will not "keep quiet when seeing something wrong".[271] Apart from not being "scared to speak up" anymore, some members described feeling important and confident about the power they have:

> "I'm kicking out of the box. I don't believe in political parties, I believe in the power of the people, I believe in poor people. I believe in myself, that no one is better than me. I am capable of doing anything. I believe in myself. I believe I'm better than the richest man in South Africa. I'm happy with the way I'm living my life, but I just want justice to take place" (AbM member 21, 2010).

6.5.4 Reflective dialogue

Some examples of reflective dialogue within AbM have been discussed widely by academics and journalists. These discussions are based mainly on the analysis of AbM's

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[269] As described by these members: "Many things have changed, I've learned things I thought I would never be able to learn, now I can see things that I couldn't before I joined AbM" (AbM member 25, 2010); "Before I joined Abahlali if I were threatened I couldn't do anything. If someone tried to evict me, I would just let them. But now, with Abahlali, I know that there are laws, and I have the support of Abahlali, whenever we have problems we just call Abahlali" (AbM member 10, 2010).

[270] One member described how his attitude changed and how he feels about authorities now: "the way the police treat me and the way general people look at me. I've gained a lot of dignity, I've gained a lot of experience to handle the things. For instance, I don't fear *umlungo* [white person], I don't fear rich man, I don't fear the police, because Abahlali trained me about my rights. And I know that I'm a 100% citizen, but before I was inferior… I was staying in a *jondolo* [shack] how can I say *umlungo* is lying, how can I say a policeman is wrong…" (AbM member 20, 2010).

[271] As one member described: "Now I stand up and say the truth even if that represents a threat to me. I would call the police if necessary, and I would face whoever is doing wrong" (AbM member 18, 2010).

meetings, press statements, interactions with government and supporters.[272] Through reflective dialogue individual members have opportunities to, for instance, discuss concepts such as shack dwellers' own resistance; own understanding; own politics – or what AbM generally refers as living politics and Abahlalism.

Data collected suggests that reflective dialogue has mainly occurred through face-to-face interactions, such as camps, community, and organisational meetings. Through face-to-face collective processes, individual members have influenced the reflective dialogue, and vice versa.

One example is given by a member who has been actively engaged in AbM meetings at the local and organisational level. Being a former police officer, this member described his change in attitude towards illegal electricity connections in informal settlements. Prior to joining AbM he perceived it as a simple criminal act. Now he sees it as a justified act of necessity and desperation. This view change, he explained, was only possible because he started to engage with AbM. Through exchanges with other members, he was able to understand the realities of other residents and AbM members from other informal settlements (AbM member 2, 2010).

Another member described how taking part in AbM meetings had changed his perception about shack dwellers' diversity, all sharing the same problems:

> "I am having a better understanding of other people, of different people. I'm having an understanding of people who are living in a shack, people who are living in the flats. (…) It has brought me to an understanding of living with different people, because Abahlali has different people, different members from different ethnic groups, different backgrounds" (AbM member 27, 2010).

For some members, reflective dialogue has influenced them from the first face-to-face meetings, when AbM was in the process of being created. One member, and former resident of Kennedy, explained that before AbM, the Kennedy Road Development

[272] Analysis of individual reflections, including talks and articles are often inaccurately represented as AbM's voice. Although individual reflection is affected by reflective dialogue, individual talks and writings are the product of individual's own reflection.

Committee (KRDC) was already engaging with the municipality, and "independently, could do without Abahlali or the other settlements" (AbM member 12, 2010). However, while communicating with residents from other informal settlements, people involved recognised a need to expand, and to create an organisation that would support and represent everyone:[273]

> "We realized there were many Kennedy Roads in the country…[previously] we had no idea that people were living in similar conditions, going through similar oppression" (AbM member 12, 2010).

Narratives from some interviews indicate that experiences and views exchanged through reflective dialogue has led some members to continuously reinforce the importance of getting together and communicating in a mutual respecting way.[274] Some members talked about getting together and accepting differences to overcome their real problems. In the Living Learning booklet, one member explained that:

> "We must do away with xenophobia, racism, discrimination against people from other provinces and sexism. These divisions are the most destructive weapon that we face in our struggles. We will only realise our truth strength when we are united. Our mission is to unite the hungry, the homeless, the exploited and the poor" (Figlan, 2013).

In another quote by another member in the Living Learning booklet, communication is described as crucial to build on the organisation's goals:

> "Without communication, nothing progresses with the community. For example, for anything that can take our Movement forward, the first thing is always to ask the

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[273] One member explained the importance of bringing people to AbM: "It was important for most of us, because we were trying to spread [the word] to the other people, to say, [no one should] sit down and fold your arms, you can come up and fight for your rights. And we can fight together, that will make us more powerful if we can fight together, like Foreman Rd, Chatterman Place. We had to mobilize the people. We were trying to make Abahlali more stronger than ever. We started as Kennedy so we just influence other settlements to join us, to fight for the same things that we were fighting" (AbM member 26, 2010).

[274] As one member explained: "Abahlali taught me to communicate with people. Abahlali taught me respect for other people, doesn't matter if it is young or old. I know that I should respect this person, because I also expect respect from him, so I should respect him first, so he would do the same to me. And if that person don't respect you, Abahlali has taught me that you don't respect that person either" (AbM member 21, 2010).

> views of the members. Only then can we begin to strategize. And when we ask about the people's views, this is done with deep respect and to encourage sharing" (Figlan *et al.*, 2009, p.15).

The importance of reflective dialogue within AbM is evident when a few members described "learning about people's views instead of making assumptions" as a key aspect of AbM's structure. One member described that: "I don't assume that I know how people feel, up until they say". He explained that he often went to meetings "with a sense of learning", and not that he "will give knowledge". He learned about what people want, how they feel, and what can be done collectively. This member further explained:

> "sometimes you can have personal plans, for example when I want to march… The fact that I'm angry, doesn't automatically makes everyone angry. So, if people are not angry, it is not yet time to march, it's not ripe, not matured, otherwise you become a joke. So let everyone be in a more or less situation to say: we are sick and tired, only when action could be taken. So, the fact that he feels, doesn't necessarily bound everyone to feel the same way" (AbM member 12, 2010).

However, based on observation from meetings and other communication processes within AbM (*e.g.* marches), not all members engaged in reflective dialogue opportunities. Some of the members interviewed, for instance, whilst present in all meetings at their community, did rarely speak or engage in the discussions. Although these members claimed during their interviews that meetings were an important opportunity to share and learn, it seems that it was a more of a one-way kind of communication.[275] This was also observed in other members not interviewed for this study. While present in many meetings and camps, for instance, these members often remained as mere observers of discussions taking place.

Other members have given similar views about these non-participant members. These members often complained that non-participating members have often missed opportunities to engage, to share their views, even when encouraged to do so. According to one member: "if you don't speak for yourself, who is going to do that for

[275] See this Chapter, section 6.2.1.5.

you?" She further explained that there are members who go to meetings and just "stay sitting like a toy", not asking questions, not saying anything. According to her, while people "discuss and decide on things in front of [this person who is not speaking]" this inactive member(s) "won't open his mouth" (AbM member 11, 2010).

The same members, who do not engage in reflective dialogue, exhibited a limited capacity for critical reflection. These members demonstrated being able to echo AbM's political 'speech', yet without critically accessing what was being said.

6.5.5 Reflecting on ICTs

This research collected views from members who use ICTs, and those who do not use ICTs, on the role of ICTs for the organisation and how ICTs influenced individual members.

AbM's approach to inclusion and sustaining a democratic structure meant that discussions and decisions could not be made through channels that excluded some members. According to most members, and based on observation from fieldwork, mobile phones, and internet were perceived as tools to aid mobilization, information, and basic communication, but not for discussions or decision making.[276] Discussions and decision-making, as described earlier in this Chapter, had to be done through face-to-face interactions.

However, ICTs influence reflection – directly or indirectly – in several ways. This section focuses on the effects of both mobile phones and internet, based on views of members who are using and not using these technologies for AbM related activities.

[276] See discussion on internet in section 6.2.1.3. As one member explained, "AbM members often have to be careful with ICTs, especially mobile phones, to not exclude people who are worse off" (AbM member 12, 2010).

6.5.5.1 Reflecting on internet tools

Internet tools were available to and used only by a small group of AbM members (see section 6.1.3.2). The majority of AbM members did not see any relevance in this technology for their lives, and appeared to consider internet use as beyond their capabilities.

Other members provided similar views when recalling the past, mainly before engaging with AbM. According to these members, before AbM "computers and the internet did not even cross [their] minds", and were considered irrelevant to their lives. However, for members who participated in the computer and internet course (hereafter course) the perception has changed.[277] Learning how to use computers and the internet revealed some aspects of the reflection process.

Members described that the way the course was taught was relaxed, and that they did not feel "stupid" for "not even knowing how to switch on a computer".[278] These members described a sense of discovery, and amazement about the possibilities that the internet provided.[279] Moreover, doing this course with their "comrades" – all sharing similar backgrounds: *i.e.* shack dwellers being unfamiliar with technology – created a conductive environment to learn. According to some interviewees, they "were all on the same boat".

The experience of the course and being introduced to this "new" technology helped to overcome feelings of a lack of ability. One member, for instance, described his reaction to another member encouraging him to join the course, and later what he discovered by taking part in it:

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[277] See further details in section 6.2.1.3.

[278] One member talked about the spell checker in word processing software underlining his name in red, "as if it was not right". "It was fun! [the course instructor] knew we were using this for the first time, and he was very calm and understanding. We are no experts, but we learned how to use it" (AbM member 21, 2010).

[279] This includes learning about spam emails. One member described that he was receiving scam emails reading: "Congratulations! You won 6 million dollars!" And with his lack of experience, he started replying to these kind of email.

> "[AbM member 12] told me that there is a course for computers, and he wanted me to do it. I was... me?! Then after that, when I went there and they taught me how to press things, and I said: hey [AbM member 12], anyone can do this, if he wants to do it, he can do it. Even if you are not educated, he can do it" (AbM member 3, 2010).

Another member expressed his excitement with the training, and how important he felt on being able to use a computer: "It was exciting, touching a computer, a great experience in my life. I felt like a professor!" (AbM member 7, 2010).

One member went as far as to describe that being seen using a computer, is considered by other members and residents of informal settlements as being smarter and having a high status: "One are seen as a sophisticated, as having a certain standard" (AbM member 12, 2010).

For the few members who were able to continue using computers and the internet, all these factors – *e.g.* overcoming feelings of lack of ability and raised self-confidence – led them to realise the importance of using the many tools available to support AbM, and their role within AbM. These members understood that simple things like having a mailing list, for instance, had the potential to reach supporters in time of crises, or expose cases of illegal evictions and violence.

For these members, being able to find content online, being able to speak English, and collaborating with external supporters online, contributed to their use of the internet.[280]

These members often described that the internet contributed to learning about a variety of issues. Some members described that, online visual aids such as pictures and videos, were particularly inspiring and helped them to engage with what they were

[280] Some AbM members were able to participate in Skype in discussions and conference panels organised by, for instance, social movements and NGOs in the US and UK.

learning about.[281] These members have, in turn, brought the "many things they learned", and the experienced acquired, to the debate inside AbM.

Members online were exposed to an enormous amount of information and speedy communication. These members were often the ones who felt bound to continue developing new skills and exploring new internet tools available. One member, for example, when inquired about Skype, replied:

> "Skype? I want to know everything about it. I want to be the first one to use new things, because I think it brings new ideas, advances ideas for further communication" (AbM member 20, 2010).

Nevertheless, for the members who participated in the course but were unable to continue using and practicing what they have learned, the excitement turned into frustration. The course helped them to realize their capacity to learn, increasing their self-steam and confidence, and see the potential use of these tools for AbM activities.[282] However, while they developed a desire to use computers and internet, they lacked the access after the course ended. Consequently, it created a frustration that did not exist before the course.

These members described that, even though they forgot most of the computer and internet skills learned, all claimed they would like to learn it again and have access to computers and the internet. Although being unable to describe which internet tools specifically they would like to use, and how, these members had clear ideas about the "things" they would like to do if they had easy internet access.[283]

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[281] One member explained that if he had not seen pictures and videos about places such as the earthquake in Haiti, he would not believe what was happening there. "If someone had told me, I probably wouldn't believe it" (AbM member 20, 2010).

[282] Some members described, for instance, that the "internet is important to fight politicians" (AbM member 18, 2010); to expose government and tell the truth about AbM (AbM member 14, 2010).

[283] Some members described that if they had access to the internet they would: "…use it more, I would like to catch up on AbM related activities, because sometimes we receive the news very late and we are supposed to receive it immediately" (AbM member 25, 2010); "I would like to get the information of things that are useful for the community and I would pass it on to the community"(AbM member 7,

But computer and internet use has also had an indirect impact on the reflection of some AbM members who have never touched a computer. A number of members, who have never used a computer or accessed the internet, described a wish to learn and use these tools to support AbM and their "role as leaders".[284] Through their engagement with AbM, they were exposed to discussions that included the outcomes of the internet communication (*e.g.* receiving messages of support; engagement with media abroad; funding through international organisations). Even though these members had little understanding of the tools available or how to use them, they expressed a curiosity and imagination regarding the internet. According to them, this curiosity and desire came as a result to being part of AbM.

Overall, members perceived 'computers' as important to AbM. Although unaware of how computers and the internet work, members who are not using these technologies are aware of the outcomes and benefits of its use for AbM. Members working online, however, had a more radical view on the role of the internet. According to these members, AbM would not be able to survive without the internet: "AbM would collapse. It wouldn't be able to sustain itself. Because it would be hard to communicate" (AbM member 15, 2010).

The AbM website

AbM's website, although just one kind of media, requires a separate section due to its curious direct and indirect effects on individual reflection.

AbM's website was updated by one AbM supporter and the information published there was not discussed among all members. AbM's website is only accessed by very few AbM members, mainly members with access to the internet at the office, and

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2010); "I would write about it and defend AbM from people who are saying bad things about it. I would like to tell the people the other side of what ANC is saying about AbM" (AbM member 18, 2010).

[284] Apart from interviewees, participant observation indicates that new members in the organisation demonstrate little consideration or expressed no desire to learn about computer and internet technologies.

occasionally, some members who check it elsewhere or when there is a free computer available at the office.[285]

Yet, through observation of meetings and based on interviews, no member has shown any sort of questioning or doubts about this process, even from members who have never accessed the website. Interviewees showed a positive and trusting attitude towards the AbM office and leadership when dealing with "internet related" things.[286] Most members interviewed claimed that what is published in the website mirrors exactly what AbM is doing and the challenges faced – or what is happening to AbM. For these members, the website represented AbM' (organisational) voice and their own individual voices.[287]

Lack of access, nevertheless, did not prevent individual members to benefit, indirectly, from the AbM website. Contrary to Sinwell's (2010) claims, some members' reflection revealed that the website has indirectly helped to mobilise and strengthen AbM.[288]

Some members interviewed, although never having engaged with computers or internet, expressed positive views on AbM website and a desire to access it, specifically.[289] These members often described, with delight, how good they felt when

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[285] One member checks AbM website through free internet access available in public libraries, and another member accesses it from his mobile phone connection attached to his computer at home.

[286] One academic supporter believed that the lack of dispute or questioning regarding the website is also related to documentation and archiving. According to him, "most people in most organisations wouldn't have much to do with the things written about it, or the archive of that material. This might explain that kind of relationship. […] I think this is also related to lack of objection. I'm not doing, I can't do it, so I'm glad someone else is doing for me" (AbM supporter 2, 2010).

[287] Members who do not have access to the website – or rarely access it – described that: AbM's website "keeps the records of Abahlali, the history of Abahlali, also the politics of Abahlali. [It is] the testimony of the work of Abahlali. Even to people who doesn't know Abahlali" (AbM member 30, 2010); "Even if [the information posted online] is not discussed, it is something that the people know, that they wouldn't say they don't know it. Because everything that is there is what people have been doing. Even if you don't tell them that, what they did is in the website" (AbM member 21, 2010).

[288] Indirect benefits included helping to raise funds; expose cases of illegal eviction, corruption; attracting attention of the media.

[289] One member explained why she would like to access AbM website: "I would like to learn, because you can get information, you can use it for many purposes, like you can see what is going on the AbM website, there are a lot of things that you can find and learn about the movement. What is going on in

"foreigners" recognized them from pictures available on the website. Other members described feeling important and protected because the website is exposing the truth about them to "the whole world".[290]

One member explained how the presence and association with foreigners, for instance, helped to boost feelings of self-importance, and courage among AbM members:

> "You see, our local people, if they see people from other countries, supporting them, they feel that we are on the right course. They feel encouraged, and they become strong in their struggle. So, if they know they have friends, from other countries, the more they think we are right. We need to put more pressure to this government, and we are going to win this fight, or this struggle. So, that has an impact" (AbM member 30, 2010).

Other members described similar feelings and assumptions regarding the presence and support of foreigners.[291] However, they were able to give details about the effects of being "known online", and abroad. Often, these members described that AbM's website has helped them to publicize conditions and get the attention of supporters abroad who, according to them, helped to expose and put pressure on the South African Government:[292]

> "The website has played an important role to publicize our struggle. It is not only to publicize our struggle but is for people to see the other side of South Africa. Some

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places, about the evictions cases, there is lots of things you can learn from the website." (AbM member 8, 2010)

[290] One member described this idea: "I think is very good and important for the whole world knowing what this government is doing to the poor people. Not giving them freedom, and human rights" (AbM member 5, 2010).

[291] In a meeting at AbM office, while discussing South African government's "disregard" of AbM's demands, an AbM member asked: "How come we're so popular outside but here… Government says they never heard of Abahlali?" (AbM member 7, 2010); one member interviewed stated: "[AbM website] is important because we are throughout the world, we are very famous. If it wasn't for the website I don't think they [foreign organisations/people] would know about us" (AbM member 19, 2010)

[292] Some of the examples given included: "[The website] impacts because, normally when the outside world knows what it is really happening in South Africa, they put pressure on the ambassadors outside the country. Because the exact picture of what is happening inside the country, not the picture that is being painted by the [South African] ambassadors out there. So it becomes easier for Abahlali to do their work, if there is this pressure coming from outside the country, coming from the internet" (AbM member 2, 2010). Another noted that: "[AbM's website] benefited the people because, instead of the government ignoring us, they decided to engage with us. They also nominated someone else to engage with us, and deal with the problem in Kennedy" (AbM member 3, 2010)

> people only know the good side of South Africa. Our role is to show that there is another side, it is not because after we got our independency things was honey and milk. There are people who are still suffering" (AbM member 15, 2010)

Some of these members believed that AbM's website – more often mentioned than AbM's mailing list and network of supporters – was crucial for disseminating information about the Kennedy Road attacks in 2009. It was also through the website that AbM was able to gather the resources and support it needed to continue with its activities (see analysis on voice through the internet in the next section). By providing access to pictures, videos, and articles about the attacks, members believed that AbM website exposed the violence, and the local government's alleged links with the perpetrators of the attacks.[293] One member, for instance, explained that the website helped to give publicity to the attacks, and kept the discussion going (AbM member 25, 2010).

Overall, AbM's website is seen as a useful medium, even by members who do not understand how it works. AbM's website, more than other internet medias, has generated interest because members identified themselves with its content, and because members feel – or think – it represents them and contributes to their organisation by creating networks and eliciting support.

6.5.5.2 Reflecting on Mobile phones

Most AbM members stated that before joining AbM, their personal mobile phones were a tool used to stay in touch with family and friends. Through engagement with AbM, some members started to realize the potential of this technology for AbM activities as well as their individual lives.

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[293] As a member explained: "…local authorities are stunned about the support that we have from outside the country. They are even amazed of how did we gained this mileage from the international publicity. Because I think they thought whatever they do, they will just crash us, silence us, without anyone knowing. But for them, it would be very difficult to do anything outside the law with us because they know the world is watching" (AbM member 2, 2010).

All interviewees agreed that mobile phone use is crucial for AbM activities, and that without it, "everything would be too slow" and the organisation would not survive. Some suggested that AbM would have probably never existed without mobile phones.

Nevertheless, there were different uses and perception on mobile phones among members. Similar to the vast majority of AbM members, some interviewees, for instance, did not – or only rarely – spent their personal airtime funds on AbM related activities. However, these members realized the potential of this tool to seek the help from other AbM members (or the leadership).[294]

Mobile phones have aided AbM's activities by, for instance, facilitating communication among members and the ability to reach supporters (e.g. journalists, academics). Yet, the full exploitation of the potential of this technology for work and social engagements was often hampered by high costs of airtime. Several interviewees described, how powerless they felt when they needed to communicate, but had to either "sit down and wait to be called" or try to find some money to buy airtime.

Lack of funds and the preference for face-to-face communication, were the main limiting factors for mobile phone use among AbM members. Some interviewees described that mobile phones were rarely used, even to reinforce new and well-established networks of communication and social bonds. One member stated that:

> "The phone, (…) only pass the message, sometimes you can pretend to be part of, whereas if you are physically there you can be seen even when you don't seem to be agreeing, you know that kind of body response" (AbM member 12, 2010).

[294] One member described that in his community, residents are now able to stop the "actions" of the local chief: "A big men like him… people used to be frightened from him, because he was very powerful, but Abahlali helped us to stand up against this man" (AbM member 5, 2010).

While a lack of funds affected all members, some members felt pressure to find ways to communicate and assist other members. These members' sense of responsibility created a constant demand on their personal mobile phones.[295]

Albeit important, these members believed that mobile phones should not substitute face-to-face communication. These members advocated that information, views and decisions must always be discussed by the collective, in face-to-face meetings. Some members, in particular, explained that meetings bring people together – they create the "social cohesion" which engages people. As illustrated by one member, if people were able to talk over the phone all the time – or whenever they wanted – it would decrease the need for meetings. According to him, social cohesion cannot be supported through mobile phones. "You still want to touch, feel people, is the human sense" (AbM member 12, 2010).

6.6 Action: expressing political voice

Similar to reflection, AbM's organisational political voice (hereafter referred as AbM's voice) has been extensively discussed, *inter alia*, in the media, by academic articles, and through the analysis of the many representations of AbM's voice. It is possible to identify some factors influencing the development of individual political voice by looking at some examples of AbM's voice.

AbM's challenge of the Slum Act legislation and the elimination of a section of the Act by the constitutional court represented a great victory as well as an expression of AbM's voice. For some AbM members, this victory reinforced their status and improved their morale.

However, although individual members might benefit from AbM's voice, AbM's voice does not always reflect the aggregate of individual members' voices. In the case of AbM's challenge of the Slum Act, for instance, few members seemed to be aware of,

[295] A member described that: "This phone, now, I sleep and wake up with the phone, I go to the toilet with the phone, I bath with this phone. It's like, it cannot be out of my sight" (AbM member 1, 2010).

and engaged in the action (*e.g.* reading and understanding the implications of the law; preparing the case with the lawyers and going to court). While having a positive impact in the lives of AbM members and shack dwellers, the lack of awareness of many members meant that they were not adding their individual voices to this specific expression of AbM's voice. Nor have they individually benefited from the learning and experience acquired through the course of action.

For this reason, this section looks into AbM's voice and individuals' voices, as two separate things, and how (or whether) they influence one another. This include a review some expressions and channels (ICT or face-to-face based) of AbM's voice, discussing how members' individual voices impact and/or is impacted by these expressions and channels.

6.6.1 Face-to-face

Within AbM, face-to-face interactions such as meetings, camps, celebrations, decision-making, and elections, represent the most common and accessible opportunities for AbM members to express their political voices. Similar to what was described in section 6.2.1.5, data of these face-to-face interactions helped to understand the context, how and whether members express their individual political voices.

Some members described participating in AbM by going to marches, protests, meetings – sometimes voting in actions and elections – or showing support by being present at court hearings. These members also described feeling able to confront the police and the local chief while knowing they have the support and protection of AbM, and that if anything happens to them, "people outside would know". Members talked with excitement about the marches and protests which they took part in as members of AbM. According to them, at these events they were able to express their anger,

bring issues to the attention of the government, and show that they would insist upon change.[296]

However, some members had not demonstrated having developed self-determination and independence such as the members described above. This was particularly visible when observing or asking these members about the decision-making processes within AbM. These members were confused or believed that, although members' opinions count, and everyone can take part in the decision-making process (mainly at the local level), there is still a final endorsement needed by the president of AbM.[297]

Moreover, my data indicates that these members were rarely engaged in independently expressing their voices. Although declaring being committed to AbM and willing to take part in activities, these members often showed dependence on AbM's structure and leadership.

Other members interviewed, at times, shared some similar expressions of individual voice, yet with key differences. These members described that, as a result of their engagement with AbM, they have developed their own voices. According to these members, through their engagement in collective activities, they have learned how to speak in public – confidently; to be self-confident enough to deal with 'expert' supporters; and being able to mobilize people.

These members described the importance of engaging in meetings, sharing views and learning from one another – previously described as engaging in reflective dialogue.

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[296] One member described that: "You see, when we say we want to get our voice heard, if we stay at home and we don't go to the meetings, we don't go to the marches, we can't achieve anything. Like the day we went to the march, we had to go there. For [the government] to see what we really need. If we sit at home, we can't get anything done. So we need our voices to be heard, it is important" (AbM member 8, 2010)

[297] When inquired about who had the most influence, which was often misunderstood with "who decides" some members showed confusion and described that AbM president gave opportunities for everyone to express their views or that the leadership was responsible for the decision at the organisational level (AbM member 9, 2010; AbM member 16, 2010). Other members talked about AbM leadership coming to ask their views and opinions, and for this reason they felt they were also part of the decision making process: "We make the decisions. We decide at the community level, and [AbM's president] will give the final word" (AbM member 6, 2010)

These members maintained the position that AbM's decision-making process depends on the existing democratic structure, and members should always be part or be represented within this structure. As I was able to observe, these members spoke at AbM meetings, discussions, camps, and similar events, and did so confidently without being intimidated by any argument, topic, or member.

Reflection on the sources of marginalisation and religion led a few members to introduce and shape opportunities to engage in reflective dialogue within AbM (see section 6.5.1 and 6.5.2 in this Chapter). Within meetings such as camps these few members have pushed for what they call "coughing out" (*ukubhodla* in isiZulu) (Zikode, 2006). The expression of coughing out is used to describe the act of motivating members in meetings to externalize their anger, their frustration and to join the discussion. It is used as a way to instigate debate, and strengthen and unify AbM's voice.[298]

Self-confidence contributed to individuals' voice. These members described being confident enough to take forward a number of issues affecting AbM informal settlements. Some members openly defied government by illegally connecting to service supplies, most commonly by connecting informal settlements to the main electricity grid. Members refer to this as "operation khanyisa" - that is the unofficial electricity connections made by residents within informal settlements.[299] Operation khanyisa is an interesting expression of AbM's voice, through which AbM has openly criticised the lack of electricity provision to shack dwellers as a violation of their rights.

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[298] As stated by a member in the 'Living Learning' booklet: "All the processes of learning that we celebrate and look after in our movement – the living learning sessions, the camps, the meetings, the protests – they are there to express the anger and understanding that is always being suppressed: our activism is the expression of this coming out" (Figlan *et al.*, 2009, p.48).

[299] According to AbM's website: "AbM has always defined Operation Khanyisa as the carefully organised installation of safe (*i.e.* properly insulated and buried cables) by carefully trained activists. There is a struggle against the failure to provide electricity to shack dwellers, armed disconnections of self organised connections and unsafe connections crated in a haphazard way" (Abahlali baseMjondolo, 2006b).

According to many interviewees, the municipality refuses to provide electricity connections – and often disconnects illegally accessed services.[300] Some members maintained that the connections are not illegal and gave accounts that, before knowing about their rights to service provision, they would not dare to make illegal electricity connections, fearing "spending a lifetime in jail", and out of fear of police brutality.

These members described that, through AbM they learned that access to basic services, such as electricity, is a right enshrined in the constitution. Members learned from examples such as the ANC support of electricity bills boycotts in the 1980's (Chance, 2011b), as well as experiences of other organisations across South Africa. Through engaging in discussion within AbM – reflective dialogue – on this issue, some AbM members described realizing their right to demand access to these services, and the need to take action. According to these members, now they make the connections openly and in disregard of the consequences:

> "Abahlali campaigned for operation khanyisa. Now I go, myself, and break cables and make the illegal connections. The police come, I run, I defy them, I explain, but I won't stop doing [it]" (AbM member 20, 2010).

Beyond the local level, these members have also shown self-confidence in relation to AbM supporters, especially white academics, lawyers, and policy makers. Contrary to the claim that AbM members were being manipulated by collaborations with academics (Walsh, 2008), some members showed independent opinions, when collaborating with these "experts". In many observed AbM activities and events, some members had a clear understanding of the reasons behind their marginalisation, and what they want or expect from government and civil society. These AbM members talked about the legacy of the apartheid system, and that the current government has forgotten its obligations to the poor. These members have also openly criticized the

[300] The reason given by the government was that shack dwellers are living in 'illegal' settlements, and not formal housing. Some members explained that, what they do is not illegal; instead, they claimed that government approach is unlawful and anti-democratic.

role of some NGOs in speaking on the behalf of the poor, without even consulting or working together with the poor.

During meetings, which included academics and policy makers, members would listen, and sometimes discuss the suggestions made by external "experts". However, there was no impulse automatically to follow suggestions made by "experts". Suggestions made by external supporters seemed to be received with more caution then other suggestions made by AbM members. In one particular example, during a community meeting, a lawyer and lecturer at an American university suggested the inclusion of a few topics in the list of demands of a march's memorandum. The suggestion, although in line with many of AbM demands, was politely dismissed because there was no time to discuss it with other communities (Community meeting at Annet Drive informal settlement, 2010).

However, some collaborative exchanges between members and supporters have directly and indirectly benefited AbM members and other shack dwellers across South Africa. In one particular case, a few members collaborated with academics and the Centre for Applied Legal Studies (CALS) to access and make available an official document, which contained a list of informal settlements selected for upgrading, and the ones selected for demolition. This kind of information was never made available for shack dwellers before. These members shared this document with informal settlements and with other organisations – also making it available online. Access to this kind of information helped with negotiations with local councillors and exposed false claims of *in situ* upgrading made to some informal settlements.

Often, when meeting with government officials, AbM members had to assert themselves to demand recognition and insist on being treated respectfully. For example, during a meeting with the Housing Department in 2006, at which an academic and AbM supporter was present (invited by AbM members), government officials assumed that he was at the meeting to represent AbM. According to one member, these government officials insinuated that AbM members present were manipulated by the supporter, because they were "too stupid" to be collaborating

with academics. AbM members at the meeting challenged that suggestion directly, and threatened to leave the meeting unless treated with respect (AbM member 12, 2010).

Bryant noted (2007), AbM has learned how to hold government officials and service providers accountable by demanding written timelines of projects and actions promised. According to some members interviewed, the difference between them and other shack dwellers is that they have learned to ask for detailed information and are aware of mechanisms to keep records and hold government officials and service providers to account if no action is taken.[301] One member, for example, described that before AbM, he and his community depended on the local councillor to come and hear their grievances and then had to wait until the councillor would pass them on to the municipality. Now they call the municipality directly, and/or organise themselves if they feel the municipality is neglecting their grievances (AbM member 7, 2010).

One way in which AbM has held government officials to account for their promises is to threaten marches and protests. Through the use of political banners, and performances (*e.g.* mock funeral of councillor) and the toyi-toyi dance, for instance, AbM creatively expressed their views, needs, discontent and grievances. AbM engages in these activities to lend weight to its political voice.

[301] One example involves access to services such as ambulance and fire-fighters. For instance, a member involved in the drop-in-centre for HIV /AIDS patients within Kennedy described that residents often came to her asking her to call the ambulance. According to this member, residents stated that, even though they knew about the free service to call the ambulance, only when AbM president, the respondent herself, or another drop-in-centre staffer called the service, the ambulance would come, or come faster (AbM member 27, 2010). Another member explained that often, residents of informal settlements are unable – or unaware – of procedures and ways to hold service providers accountable to their actions and inactions. According to this member, when he calls, services providers always respond: "The difference is that I make people accountable... If you call the police, make sure you take the date, the time, the name of the person you are talking to, you ask for reference numbers, so we can make a follow up. So I always make notes to the communities, saying that, again and again..." (AbM member 12, 2010).

However, some members, more than others, saw marches and protests as a last resort, after all other negotiating channels were exhausted.[302] AbM marches and protests are not spontaneous, and require:

> "… a great deal of time, deliberation and mobilization. Resources also must be pooled. A protest, moreover, does not end in the streets but often in local hospitals and prisons, given the high and known risk of police brutality and arrest" (Chance, 2011b, p.81).

These members, mostly leaders, are often left with the responsibility to find resources to enable marches and protests (*e.g.* funds for transportation; t-shirts; communication); and to be in charge of most (if not all) tasks regarding the organisation of these kind of event (*e.g.* contacting communities, liaising with media). Consequently, these leaders have suffered considerable pressure from other members when people got hurt or arrested as a result of marches or protests.[303]

Nevertheless, the vast majority of members agreed that marches and protests were important to express their collective grievances, and to motivate other members to the "struggle". Two members, respectively, explained:

> "In the march you learn street stuff, that's how much support do you have, how passionate are the people behind you, and the cause you are fighting for" (AbM member 25, 2010)

> " People from the shacks have lost faith, and they think that meetings are for people like [AbM member 12], like [AbM member 20], for these kind of people. But when they go to marches, that's when they feel they belong. They think 'this is where we come in, when we feel part of it'. And this is where people in the meetings say: we have people ['s support]" (AbM member 21, 2010).

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[302] As explained by one member: "It is important to go to march because after those meetings, our engagements or negotiations with the government; so then, if there is nothing happening after those negotiations, we need to come up again and raise our voices. And we should expose our government that, even [though] we were negotiating, but nothing happened" (AbM member 26, 2010).

[303] One member goes as far to say that she thinks that no one would say that they like to march, because "consequences of it are always unbearable, its either you getting arrested, even if you are not arrested you became [physically exhausted]" (AbM member 15, 2010).

Some members also believed that marches and protests are useful to get media attention, which helped to amplify their voices. Media coverage of AbM has been essential in supporting their voices (although not always publishing positive or accurate information about AbM).[304] Over a number of years a few members have gained access and – in some cases – develop a close relationship with some journalists. Press coverage, for instance, has allowed some of these members to increased pressure on municipalities to comply with agreements, or expose corruption, and violence against shack dwellers.[305]

Lastly, AbM's voice was also expressed through a number of speeches and writings, published on AbM website and through the media. This kind of expression was frequently used to discuss or clarify AbM's position on particular issues (*e.g.* xenophobic attacks in South Africa; contesting and criticizing government manipulation of data on upgrades of informal settlements), and expose violence and corruption on behalf of AbM members and other shack dwellers.

Many of these pieces of writing – and speeches – were authored by teams of people, which were given a "mandate" to put in writing the decisions and views reached in discussions in meetings. For instance, when the media blamed shack dwellers for shack fires, AbM members would discuss the particular statement in a meeting. In this meeting, a group of people would volunteer and receive a mandate to write a response, or a press release. The response would reflect what was discussed in this meeting (*e.g.* need to cook and use candles inside shacks, and lack of electricity provision by the government).

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[304] The newspaper 'Isolezwe' published on the 15/0/2013, an article claiming AbM was going to join Julius Malema's new party: Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF). This happen during a time when AbM was meeting with all political parties (except the ANC) to hear these parties "proposals for the poor" in order to get AbM's support in the coming elections. Yet, AbM has never agreed to join forces with EFF, and this article was inaccurately reflecting the meeting. AbM later posted on their website a copy of another article by the same newspaper – dated 19/07/2013 – explaining that AbM "has never had any plans to join Malema's party and will not be joining Malema's party" (Abahlali baseMjondolo, 2013).

[305] One member gives an example that when police come to the settlement, they might search some residents, but they never search him. According to him, if they do: "I can accuse them of harassment, and it could be in the pages of the Mercury [newspaper], the next day. Police avoids being put in this situation in the media. They know I'm a big man, you touch me, you touch the whole world" (AbM member 20, 2010).

As suggested in this Chapter (section 6.4.3) some members demonstrated being more engaged and responsible for AbM activities than others. This was also observed when it came to activities that, for instance, demanded writing a press release or doing a speech on behalf of AbM. As I observed, a small number of members volunteered – or felt obliged to volunteer – more often, while others remained quiet. This frequently meant that, even against these more active members' will or capabilities, they felt forced to represent and speak on behalf of AbM and the many informal settlements part of the organisation.

Despite the pressure, speaking on the behalf of AbM has also has an positive impact on these members. Some claimed that writing on behalf of AbM has been an important experience, during which they were able to develop writing skills and self-confidence. For some members, these experiences have helped them write and speak, individual pieces, on an array of subjects including poverty, politics, capitalist, socialism, and marginalisation.[306]

6.6.2 ICTs role for political voice

ICTs have been key for AbM's voice and some individual voices. As described throughout this Chapter, both internet and mobile phones have played distinctive and, at times, complementary roles within the movement and provided external support to AbM. In this section I present data, separately, on internet and mobile phone use for individual and AbM's voice.

6.6.2.1 Voice through internet based tools

Internet use within AbM has contributed to expressing its organisational voice. AbM used tools such as mailing lists and website enabled the dissemination of news, press releases, and information to a number of media organisations (*e.g.* newspapers, TV channels, independent journalists, and online press), nationally and internationally.

[306] See for example "Living and Learning" (Figlan *et al.*, 2009); or "Abahlali baseMjondolo to Mourn UnFreedom Day Once Again" (Abahlali baseMjondolo, 2008)

Disseminating news about the organisation of events such as marches and protests, usually followed articles and statements explaining the reasons which led to a particular protest, helped to build the momentum, and gave more visibility and endorsement (by supporters) to the action.[307]

By means of its online presence and through the development of a network of supporters online, AbM helped to garner support and draw attention to crises affecting the organisation and its members. In one particular case, the AbM website and mailing list were essential in propagating information about the attacks in Kennedy in 2009. In the following 24 hours after the attacks, a "letter of concern" was issued and signed by over 100 "academics, professionals, students, activists, members of civil society organisations, authors based in South Africa and abroad" (Abahlali baseMjondolo, 2009c). A number of social movements organisations, NGOs, church and human rights international organisations issued statements condemning the attacks; the news about the violent events were published in many South African newspapers, as well as abroad (including UK, France, Brazil, Mexico, Italy, US and New Zealand).

The vast amount of information on the 2009 attacks made available online, mainly by AbM supporters, helped to raise funds to support victims. Articles and statements published elucidated AbM member's role as victims, and not perpetrators as government officials tried to portray them (see below).

However, information available online was mainly accessed by supporters and media, and it did not help to communicate to other informal settlements. As mentioned in this Chapter (section 6.2.2), some of AbM branches were unable to contact AbM. Moreover, as some members later discovered when visiting some informal settlements, some shack dwellers believed that AbM members had been the

[307] An AbM supporter explained that AbM's website is really useful for new journalists, "because if they go to the website, and see the link to all other press releases which were about [shack] fire; and then understand more about the context; understand that this has been going on for years, that people march against that - it is not just drunk people dropping candles. [The journalists] can see that is [about shack dwellers] rights, and other issues associated with it" (AbM supporter 1, 2010).

perpetrators of the attacks, and that Kennedy residents had expelled AbM. AbM believes that this has to do with the smear campaign undertook by ANC affiliates inside informal settlements, local ANC councillors and a declaration by both Provincial Minister for Safety and Security and the Provincial Police Commissioner, stating that Kennedy has been liberated from AbM. [308]

AbM's voice online, especially its website, might also have drawn attention from the South African security forces. There was at least one confirmed attempt to censor AbM website. According to an AbM supporter, responsible for uploading information into AbM's website, when he was arrested in 2007 he was taken out of the holding cell to be interrogated by the intelligence police. As described by this supporter, all the policemen interrogating him were aggressive and all they wanted to know about was AbM's website: "And they told me straight up that I must stop; stop the website!" (AbM supporter 1, 2010). AbM has defied the police, and local ANC leaders, by continuously exposing corruption and violation of shack dwellers rights through its website.

Overall, the majority of AbM members who did not have access to the internet, believed that their interests were represented within AbM's online voice. In some cases, some members without internet access had their individual views and writings, published online, usually facilitated by those with access.

However, members with internet access were the only ones who were able to develop and express their, and AbM political voice online.

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[308] Willies Mchunu, Provincial Minister for Safety and Security, and the Provincial Police Commissioner, Hamilton Ngidi, issued a statement after the attacks that Kennedy Road informal settlement had been 'liberated' from Abahlali (Sacks, 2009). A number of members described how shocked they were to hear from residents of other informal settlements, that AbM members were the ones responsible for the Kennedy Road attacks. Some members believed that this accusation happen as a result to Mchunu's statements after the attacks. One member explained that: "Unfortunately, locally to the communities outside AbM, [information] was not communicated properly because the effects about the attacks were not true. It was like Abahlali attacked the residents, where as the residents had complains against Abahlali" (AbM member 2, 2010).

Through online exchanges, these members were able to develop skills and capabilities, and acquire experience in using online tools and media. These members have, for instance, established new ways to express their voice by taking advantage of the tools and features available online. One example cited was the use of images found through online search to illustrate issues discussed in articles (*e.g.* open sewage and violence against protests) (AbM member 3, 2010).

Communicating and expressing individual (and organisational) political voice was, once again, supported by some members' fluency in English. AbM members using the internet have benefit from their ability to speak and write in English.

Members seen as able to use "computers" and the internet (as well as seen speaking on TV) are often considered as important leaders by other AbM members and shack dwellers. These members tend to have their profile raised inside AbM, and are often expected to lead and dictate actions within AbM.

6.6.2.2 Voice through mobile phones

Since AbM's foundation, mobile phones have played a role in providing access from external people (*e.g.* media, supporters, *etc.*) to AbM, and for expressing organisational voice. Through SMS, AbM members issued concise versions of press releases, or dictated statements to be published online by supporters. Whenever a statement is published online, the phone numbers of AbM members responsible for the statement is placed at the bottom, allowing media or general public to call and inquire about the story, or event in question.

Even though AbM members were contacted on their private mobile phones, following press statements or articles about AbM, they had to speak on the behalf of AbM, and not simply give their personal views. When a particular member – or members – was "mandated" to represent AbM, this member needed inform him/herself, about all issues and views concerning the subject matter (*e.g.* a press release after a shack fire). This member needed to be prepared to answer and contest, over his or her phone, questions about AbM views and statements given.

A less evident role of mobile phones within AbM is communication between members and governing institutions. As often described by some members, communication with government officials is rarely successful through mobile phones. At its most basic function, members have used their mobile phones to set meetings and request official information, albeit often unsuccessful. In some cases, government officials who had been previously communicating with AbM members, ceased to answer their phones and reply to left messages.[309]

Probably the most interesting example of AbM organisational voice through mobile phones is what AbM members called: "cellphone toyi-toying". In 2006, AbM was awaiting a meeting with the provincial minister of housing, following a protest and the delivery of a memorandum, with a list of demands. However, after weeks of waiting, within an AbM executive meeting, members decided to stage a phone protest, by bombarding the housing department with calls and text messages (AbM member 3, 2010; AbM member 15, 2010; Bryant, 2007; Willems, 2010)

One government official from the housing department considered the action useless, and claimed that these calls did not put pressure on the department. According to him: "we answered when we had to answer (…) [the phone protest] was just annoying" (SA government official 1, 2010). AbM members did not consider it useless. According to all members interviewed who took part in the action, jamming the housing department lines and being annoying was to show the government that AbM would no sit quiet and wait forever.[310] Being accustomed to not getting a reply from government

[309] One particular example comes from my own experience while on fieldwork. One member of AbM from Motala Heights had been trying to speak and meet with a housing department official, who was responsible for the upgrading plans for her area. She had once succeeded to speak to him when calling from a third party phone. Yet, the official had politely turned her down saying being currently too busy to meet and would get back to her in "due time" (which never happened). The following week, while I was with this member, she tried to call this official, from her own mobile. After 5 attempts, she received no answer. I then called the same number from my own mobile phone, and not only go through the official, but secured a meeting with him the next day.

[310] As two members explained: "The impact was to destabilize them, it worked because you don't know what kind of call they missed while we were calling. We made their phone busy. (…) We just wanted to stress them. They won't be able to make or receive their own calls" (AbM member 20, 2010); "The intention was to make the phone ring. Because we knew they would answer to all of us. We didn't care

officials, some interviewees believed that AbM was only able to secure a meeting with the housing department, because of the cellphone toyi-toying.

Some members described with excitement the numerous calls they made during a week of cellphone toyi-toying.[311] These members explained that whenever they called and managed to get through, they would first introduce themselves as AbM members and then ask questions such as: "When are you going to build our houses? When are you going to answer our questions?"

On rare occasions, some members have used their personal mobile phones for unplanned actions, often trying to expose government corruption. In one particular example, a member, while listening to a local radio station programme in Durban, heard a local council claim that "the money Municipality allocated to Motala [Heights informal settlement] was spent and everything was already done in that area". This member, together with three other AbM members and also residents of the Motala Heights informal settlement, immediately called the radio station to contest the statements. According to her, they exposed the council right away, saying it was all "falsehoods since [they] are still living in shacks" (AbM member 11, 2010).

Threats

Yet, mobile phone use for political voice seem to be hampered by other issues beyond the ones described previously (*e.g.* avoiding decisions making through exclusionary channels; lack of funds). While there is no evidence of South African government having intercepted calls or SMS messages between AbM members, there are examples that indicate otherwise. One particular example comes from an AbM rural member who has often travelled across different locations to meet with rural shack dwellers.

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if they answered us or not, we wanted to jam their lines to remind them about us" (AbM member 7, 2010).

[311] Members described doing between 4 and 20 calls each, some from AbM landline but the majority from their personal mobile phones. One member gave accounts of this action: "We used our own airtime. We were tired of excuses and we thought, let's use our technology to put pressure" (AbM member 3, 2010).

This member stated that twice he received calls from an unknown number. The caller, who he described as secret police, already knew about his exact location. According to this member, not even his wife knew were he was (AbM member 30, 2010). In another circumstance, two members have described receiving threats from an unknown number in which the caller was in possession of information exchanged by a few members over the phone.

A number of members have relayed, on several occasions, that they have received threats on their mobile phones since the creation of AbM. These threats to life and property are serious and repeated. Throughout fieldwork, during interviews and while participating in meetings, I frequently heard reports of individual members receiving threats over the phone. On two occasions I witnessed AbM members receiving such calls.

I have too received what I described as 'weird calls' during my fieldwork in South Africa, although not to the same level of aggressiveness described by some AbM members. During my last 3 weeks in Durban, I received about 5 calls from an unknown number, usually late at night. These calls were brief and the caller stated things like: "It is time for you to go home" or "leave Durban". In one particular call the caller said he was "watching me". Although not feeling personally threatened, these calls allowed me to understand a little bit better the fear and harassment experienced by many AbM members.

Since the Kennedy attacks, victims, and members of the Interim Committee stated that the threats had increased. Although mobile phones became the main channel of communication after the attacks, members stated that they avoid giving too much information over the phone because they think their phone conversations are tape-recorded.

When asked about their actions after receiving a threatening call, some members explained that they always seek assistance of other members, but never the police.[312] Some AbM members explained that they had to learn how to deal with the fear from threats, and evaluate which measures they need to take to ensure their security. Usually, threats received are immediately discussed with other members, external supporters and, in some cases, the media. At times, precautionary measures are taken, such as commuting home from meetings in groups, especially if late at night. Most importantly, for the members whose phones are essential for their work, they are careful about what information to share.

The fear that their phones are being tracked has led to caution in the way they used their phones. The words of a member illustrate this point:

> "In this struggle we learned to trust comrades [rather] than policemen or any other people. I only tell [fellow members] that there are people following me and threatening me, they want to kill me, so, if you are calling me, or if you want to tell me anything about the struggle, don't ask me where am I; don't tell me you are somewhere waiting for me, don't give details of the places we are going to meet, because there are people who want to follow us. And don't talk sensitive things over the phone" (AbM member 30, 2010).

6.7 Closing remarks

The case study presented here describes that regardless of the enormous disadvantages in which shack dwellers endure in their lives some of them manage to develop a political voice in this context.

The lack of resources, low self-confidence, and lacking sense of agency are among some of the factors preventing AbM members to engage in AbM and develop their individual political voices. External criticism (by academics and government officials), as an attempt to delegitimise the organisation, has created new barriers for expressing political voice, yet, it has also worked to unify AbM members against "those who want

[312] Some interviewees reported that the police never investigated these threats, so they stopped opening cases at the police station.

to keep the poor silenced" (AbM member 7, 2010; AbM member 12, 2010; AbM member 23, 2010). Moreover, some attempts to disrupt the organisation (*e.g.* the Kennedy attacks) show that AbM members had often paid a high price for having a political voice.

Some members might have internalized oppression. This has prevented them to break the cycle of dependency which they have become accustomed to inside informal settlements. It has also inhibited their capacity to take advantage of the same opportunities which led other members to further develop their political voices. These disparities might not be so obvious when members join AbM, but become more exacerbated through members' different levels of engagement in AbM and expression of political voices (this will be further discussed in Chapter 7).

The role of both the internet and the mobile phone in supporting the political voice of AbM's members is complex. Some technologies have, for instance, enabled mobilizations and supported the creation of social ties, as well as created links with external supporters who became important assets for the organisation. However, the role of ICTs within AbM has presented a multitude of new challenges for shack dwellers. Lack of funds, fluency in English, and self-confidence are some of the factors identified here as inhibiting some members meaningful use of ICTs for political voice.

Despite all that, AbM has succeeded in remaining a grassroots organisation. As the case study has shown, AbM is an organisation founded, led and composed of shack dwellers. Most importantly, AbM is a grassroots organisation in which its leaders and engaged members have endeavoured to keep processes democratic and representative of shack dwellers. As shack dwellers, AbM members struggle with funds, and access to technologies. However, AbM members have been finding ways to overcome their limitations, and are discovering and engaging – to different degrees – with ICTs to support the development of AbM and their own voices.

7. Discussion

Introduction

This Chapter offers an interpretation of the case study presented in Chapters 5 and 6. The first part of this Chapter, analyses data presented in each category outlined by the analytical framework, in Chapter 6. The second part of this Chapter then specifically discusses different types of political voice identified among AbM members. Moreover, the Chapter examines how the factors described in Chapter 6 influence the development of political voice in respect to three different types of political voice identified. The last part moves on to answers the research questions in terms of the mechanisms and dynamics identified from the empirical findings as well as in regard to the relevant literature.

7.1 Discussion of the findings

This section focuses on proving an analysis of the data presented in each category of the analytical framework as laid out in the previous Chapter. It reviews data by relating it back to he literature reviewed in Chapter 2, and analyses each factor identified in light of the development and expression of individuals' political voices.

7.1.1 Analysis of Personal Experiences and Background (PEB)

Data on AbM members background, provided in the previous Chapter, suggests some of the reasons for an individuals' lack of voice (Freire, 1970; Watts, unpublished; Watts and Guessous, 2006), and factors potentially influencing the development of members' political voice.

Some factors inhibiting political voice, which have been previously identified in the literature about South African marginalised groups, were also identified in AbM, including ethnic divisions, conflict in rural areas, and poverty. As expected, the majority of members described not having engaged with political activities before AbM.

Among the reasons which led some members to engage with political activity (mobilization) – mainly leading to the creation or joining AbM – is their discontent with the situation in informal settlements, and lack of responsiveness of public institutions and political parties, such as the ANC.

Some members have, in this process, started to perceive to feel dominated and manipulated by these groups. These accounts seem no different from the patronage relationships identified in the literature (Auyero, 2000; de Wit and Berner, 2009; Robins *et al.*, 2008), especially within South African informal settlements (Carter and May, 1999; Francis, 2002; Kessel and Oomen, 1997).

Similar to what was observed elsewhere (McAdam and Paulsen, 1993; Passy and Giugni, 2001), frustration with the government, party politics, and the lack of tangible results from engagement with political parties (in this case, the ruling ANC), appeared to be the driving reason for some members' activism.

However, this is not a characteristic shared by all members. As described in the previous Chapter, some members did not show the same kind of questioning and understanding of party politics and patronage relationships. These differences seem to impact engagement and sense of agency of these members (see below). Members described particular circumstances and overall dissatisfaction which made them seek help and engage with AbM.

Use of ICTs prior to AbM

Similar to what was observed in other developing countries (Castells *et al.*, 2006; Cullum, 2010; Ling and Donner, 2009), for AbM members access to mobile phones offered the immediate communication benefits and substituted inaccessible landlines.

Most AbM members owned cheap phones with basic features, similar to people in other parts of the developing world (Ling and Donner, 2009; Molony, 2008; UNDP, 2012). The use of mobile phones was constrained by high airtime tariffs (Duncan, 2010; Smith, 2009). Interviewees described a pattern of usage similar to that described

in the literature as focusing on the intimate sphere (Ling and Campbell, 2008; Miller, 2006; Sey, 2011).

Observations and interview responses about the use of computers and the internet confirms what has been observed in digital inclusion projects and ICT4D literature: beyond the lack of access, there was an overwhelming feeling of being unable to learn, understand, or use such technology (Avgerou and Madon, 2005; Madon *et al.*, 2009; Mehra *et al.*, 2004; Postma, 2001; Selwyn, 2004).

7.1.2 Analysis of Social context

Collective processes are fundamental to the development of an individual's political voice (Craig and Mayo, 2004; Diani, 2000; Freire, 1970, 1983, 1992; Milan, 2013; Summers-Effler, 2002). By observing collective processes in AbM, certain aspects that influence the development and expression of political voice in individuals were identified.

7.1.2.1 Self-organisation 'versus' collaboration

Self-organisation is described in the literature as collective processes in which individuals dictate their own agenda without the interference of outsiders who do not experience the same reality (Phillips, 2003). Through self-organisation, marginalised individuals can exchange and construct their own knowledge (Alinsky, 1946; Gaventa and Cornwall, 2008), while establishing trust, sense of belonging, and commitment (Polletta, 2002).

Yet, self-organisation within social movements is not always a straightforward practice. Social movements, as well as grassroots organisation, are often at risk of being "manipulated" or steered by experts (internal or external) who set the agenda (Phillips, 2003). Collaborations between members and non-members, even among individuals who share similar interests, are affected by power relations within and surrounding them (Gaventa, 2002; Polletta, 2002).

AbM was created and established in a contentious context. First, the social and economic divisions of informal settlements (Bremner, 1994; Crankshaw, 1996; Morris and Hindson, 1992; Patel, 2012; Smit, 2006), are reflected in AbM's structures. As observed in the literature on shack dwellers in South Africa, relationships between AbM members have been influenced by issues of ethnic, racial, and language differences.

Initially, AbM seems to have struggled to establish and expand its social capital which is an important asset to grassroots organisations (Rodriguez, 2013; Warschauer, 2003b). This is due to suspicion and mistrust that might have hampered initial mobilizations and collaborations among members, especially during the creation of AbM. Yet, very early on, AbM members focused on creating opportunities to meet face-to-face. As described in the literature, through face-to-face meetings, people are able to share grievances, views, feelings, and emotions (Garrett, 2006; Lawler and Thye, 1999; Lucio-Villegas, 2009). This seems to have aided the development of trust and a sense of togetherness among AbM members.

The sense of togetherness seems to have been beneficial for the inclusion of women within AbM. While women within South African informal settlements often do not engage in local political activity (Beall, 2005a; Thomas, 2002), AbM has displayed a different pattern.[313] Women not only claim to feel on equal terms, but were engaged in activities and held leadership positions in AbM.

Although AbM has been criticized for being manipulated by outsiders, such as academics and NGOs, these claims seemed to be mostly based on an assumption that AbM members (who were shack dwellers) lack understanding or capacity to self-organise. This assumption, as the literature review suggests (Freire, 1979; Prilleltensky and Gonick, 1996; Reinharz, 1994), is not uncommon.

[313] See Chapter 4, section 4.1.1.

AbM members have, in fact, demonstrated a high level of mistrust towards external collaborators, especially at the beginning. This might have been the result of shack dwellers disillusionment with government officials' unfulfilled promises, and experiencing prejudice (see Chapter 4). Yet, through frequent face-to-face interactions and the support received from external collaborators, AbM shack dwellers were able to develop long term relationships of trust. Similar to what was observed in other social movements, face-to-face interaction provides a basis for the development of trust, social bonds and identity among participants (Diani, 2000; Milan, 2013; Summers-Effler, 2002).

In the case of AbM, the establishment of trust and collaboration with external supporters might have influenced the introduction and development of ideas and reflection among some members. Discussion within AbM which, included concepts such as critical silence (by Paulo Freire) and ideas by Frantz Fanon,[314] have been either introduced or learned through readings coming from academics.

However, collaborations between members and non-members were not always positive, and can be affected by power relations within and surrounding them (Gaventa, 2002; Polletta, 2002; Willem and Scarbrough, 2006). This has also been true for AbM, as the example described in the previous Chapter showed. AbM, like other grassroots organisations (Phillips, 2003), suffered from "manipulation" from outsiders trying to take advantage of the organisation.

In the case of AbM, beside the anger and disillusionment that the incident with the research institute of UKZN brought to some members (discussed in section 6.2.1.2), it also had a positive impact on their mobilization and willingness to engage with the internet. Although this was probably not the only reason behind the introduction of the internet, and the necessity to learn to use online communication tools, the incident created the perception of an immediate need of engagement with the internet that previously did not exist for AbM members.

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[314] See Freire (1985a, 1985b, 1992) and Fanon (Fanon, 1961; Gibson, 2011a).

This episode illustrated how grassroots organisations such as AbM are vulnerable to having their political voice misrepresented, or subverted by individuals, NGOs, and academic organisations with resources and access to technologies such as the internet. In the case of AbM, overcoming this form of technological gatekeeping was an important step toward the development of political voice. As a result of having engaged with the internet to overcome external manipulation and problems of gatekeeping, some AbM members were able to develop autonomous political voices online (as described in the previous Chapter, see section 6.6.2.1).

Introduction, use and adapting ICTs

AbM's use of the internet played a different role from the role of mobile phones, which had already been available. As described in the previous Chapter, two things marked the introduction of the internet for AbM: the website and the computer and internet training course.

Similar to what has been observed in other social movements (della Porta, 2011; Hara and Estrada, 2005; Wasserman, 2007), AbM's website has turned into an important window on its activities (*i.e.* mainly aimed at an external audience and projecting AbM's voice at home and abroad). At the same time, the running and maintenance of the website, and the associated increase in visibility and outreach, created the need for AbM members to adapt and take control themselves. The computer and internet course was fundamental enable some members to access the website, and learn how to use this tool. More important, it had an important role in helping AbM members who were part of the course, to realize their individual capabilities in learning and engaging with the internet.

The use of mobile phones had a major impact on the ability to engage with AbM. Most interestingly, data presented on the social context in the previous Chapter shows that by engaging with AbM some members have changed how much and for what purposes they used their personal mobile phones. Because of AbM, members started redirecting

airtime to AbM related activities, while before these members would have spent this resource on the intimate sphere.[315]

The role of some members within AbM meant that the mobile phones of these members became a collective resource for AbM and its members, despite being personal devices. The affected members, whose personal devices essentially became appropriated as a common good, struggled to afford airtime.

Moreover, other aspects seem to have influenced the way they used and spent airtime for AbM related activities. For instance, traditions and reluctance have also influenced the adoption of new technologies or tools by AbM members. Frequently, these factors decreased or limited the adoption of technology-mediated communication among AbM members, or prevented them reducing the cost of their airtime. Examples include the initial resistance to learn how to use computers and the internet, and a cultural stigma attached to another communication tool.[316]

There was also a preference to make calls, instead of sending SMS. The oral aspect of communication was particular pronounced among AbM members, a finding that has also been observed in tribal groups in some African countries (*e.g.* Ghana and South Africa)(O'Farrell *et al.*, 1999; Turner, 2005). Speaking was considered by all of AbM members a more important medium of communication than writing (or, in this case: texting), precluding or slowing down the adoption of cheaper messaging services.

Language and education also presented obstacles. The predominant languages among AbM members are iXhosa and isiZulu, which are deemed to be impractical for writing a short SMS. Some AbM members interviewed had low education levels, and felt uncomfortable to write. These two aspects might also be related to the preference of speaking face-to-face, or making calls.

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[315] The "intimate sphere" refers to private calls to friends and family (Ling and Campbell, 2008; Miller, 2006; Sey, 2011), in this case non-AbM related calls.

[316] See appendix 8 for "The Mxit experience".

Finally, face-to-face and voice call communication are seen by AbM members as the only way to establish relationships of trust. The importance of establishing trust among AbM members has also been found elsewhere, for example Molony's (2006) study about business relationships of farmers in Tanzania. Similar to AbM, Molony (2006) described that face-to-face relationships are often favoured over using mobile phones, or technology is employed after a trustworthy face-to-face relationship is established.

Face-to-face interaction: localized context and self-determination

As described in Chapter 6, a vital element of AbM's structure are the opportunities for face-to-face interaction. It is through opportunities to meet face-to-face that members have learned about one another, and their shared suffering. This was particularly important because before AbM, these members reported to have lacked bonds and had limited relationships with residents of the same informal settlement.

As described in Chapter 5 and 6, AbM 'communities' exhibit the same socio-economic divisions as other South African informal settlements (Bremner, 1994; Crankshaw, 1996; Friedman, 1993; Morris and Hindson, 1992; Smit, 2006). In fact, the informal settlements studied are not really 'communities', and (beyond family connections) some interviewees described having no links with other residents prior to their engagement with AbM.

By engaging in face-to-face meetings, as suggested in the literature (Garrett, 2006), sharing their stories and grievances, helped these members getting to know other members and residents, and fostered a sense of collective identity.

Beyond sharing and learning, face-to-face meetings are an opportunity to support and encourage self-determination (Phillips, 2003). Some AbM members have also used face-to-face opportunities to talk about rights, instigate discussions, and encourage individual autonomy, self-confidence, and self-determination.

An important aspect of AbM's face-to-face meetings is singing and praying. Religion (predominantly Christian) plays an important part in the lives of shack dwellers in South Africa. Shack dwellers have reported attending religious meetings or ceremonies on a weekly basis, and getting involved with church activities (Beall, 2005b; Thomas, 2002). This has also been observed among AbM members.

For AbM members, singing and praying together helped to de-stress, and raise the general morale. As described in the literature, spirituality can incite solidarity, zeal, inspiration, and courage within social movements (Brookings, 1999 cited on Watts et al, 1999).[317]

7.1.3 Analysis of Resources

Resources identified in the previous Chapter as skills, capabilities and experiences, have often been directly linked to the engagement of certain members to AbM.

Some of the findings build on the reviewed literature. For instance, collective organisation and participation enhance knowledge sharing and self-organisation – or self-determination (Gamson, 1991; Tropp and Brown, 2004). While, through self-organisation individuals develop negotiating skills to engage with political authorities (Polletta, 2002).

As described in the literature review Chapter, some of these resources can also be used to improve certain communication processes and the channels in which they take place, and vice versa.

7.1.3.1 Skills, capabilities and experiences

When analysing the data presented in section 6.3.1, it is possible to observe some of the differences of skills, capacities, and experiences acquired among AbM members. For instance, while some members have developed leadership skills, others referred to

[317] For a discussion see the literature review of this dissertation, Chapter 2.

the support from AbM's leadership as an important asset – and demonstrated a certain level of dependency towards other members.

Some members have learned how to autonomously deal with government officials, and have been active speakers within AbM meetings and events. These members have acquired important skills and experiences such as the ability to decode government jargon on official documents, which are crucial for their autonomy (Schlozman *et al.*, 2012; UN-HABITAT, 2006).

Some of the skills described in the previous Chapter – *i.e.* the ability to speak in public including addressing different audiences; organisational skills – were acquired as a consequence of some members' involvement with AbM, as well as through exchanges and interactions with some academics, policy makers, lawyers, NGOs, and supporters; and through the interactions with other grassroots organisations (*e.g.* rural network)

The experience and exchanges between these few AbM members supported the development of skills and capabilities. It has also built the confidence and know-how to perform certain activities without the assistance and support of external supporters.

Aspects discussed above (*e.g.* self-organisation; collaborating with external supporters) suggest that these aspects influence how AbM members acquire and develop skills, capabilities and experiences. The majority of members gave similar accounts of learning and sharing knowledge, yet – as it will be reviewed next under Sense of Agency – they differed in the degree of autonomy.

7.1.3.2 Resources influence on ICTs use

The development of skills, capabilities, and gained experiences as a result of some members' engagement with AbM, has had an impact on the way they adopted, used, and re-purposed some ICTs.

Regarding the internet, for instance, despite the lack of "physical resources" (Warschauer, 2008), the most basic issue relating to the digital divide literature

(DiMaggio and Hargittai, 2001; Norris, 2001; Selwyn, 2004; van Dijk, 2005), some AbM members – who participated in the course, and who could practice at the office – were able to develop skills and capabilities which made them more self-sufficient. These members learned and developed what Warschauer (2008) refers to as "human resources" and "digital resources" (see Chapter 2).

The issue of digital resources highlights another factor of navigating online information: English. English is the main language used for content available online (Gray, 2006; Norris, 2001; Warschauer, 2008). As described in the previous Chapter, fluency in English was essential to some members' development of internet skills and capabilities. At the same time, these skills and fluency in English was important to supplement and augment external "social resources" (Warschauer, 2008). Social resources enabled a new way of communication which was unavailable and unforeseen by some AbM members prior to their engagement with AbM.

Mobile phone use, by far the most ubiquitous ICT tool among AbM members, has also been shaped by the skills, capabilities, and experiences acquired after engaging with AbM. Some AbM members repurposed the way they used to use mobile phones, to organise and mobilize for AbM.

The example of the police arrest of the resident and vice-president of AbM in 2006 (described in the previous Chapter), demonstrates that beyond mobilization, mobile phones were also a channel for reciprocity (Suárez, 2006) between AbM members in times of crises. The experience of this particular event, as well as other similar events, demonstrated a certain level of reciprocity and willingness to mobilize and act (Cullum, 2010; Hermanns, 2008) among some of AbM members.

The choice of a particular mobile phone feature has also yield some interesting findings. Beyond the general preference of voice calls, age, language and time spent as a member of AbM (especially if engaged in different activities) have also influenced the choice between voice call and SMS among AbM members.

However, even among some older members, engagement with AbM activities has motivated the use of SMS for AbM related activities. This indicates that, time as a member of AbM has also an effect on SMS use.

Language has also led to some re-adaptation and creativeness. Members, who were not fluent in English, have attempted to create short versions of isiZulu and isiXhosa, or even mix these languages with broken English. This is a feature that has been observed in other groups in South Africa, where English-isiZulu and English-isiXhosa make regular use of hybrids of English and isiZulu/isiXhosa (Deumert and Masinyana, 2008).

Yet, Language can be a problem, as the example of SMS use demonstrates, which might impact on the nature of the political voice being developed. This issue seem to be mainly affecting members who are not fluent in English, which could potentially inhibit the political voice of some members within AbM. Members who are not fluent in English lack the capacities to communicate effectively (*e.g.* using SMS). Other issues such as further engaging with internet tools and interacting with external supporters may also pose challenges (see discussion in the previous Chapter, section 6.6).

Other particular kind of use of mobile phone, described in the previous Chapter, demonstrate a practice that has been observed in other groups. Similar to the findings on "call back" usage among marginalised rural communities in South Africa (Bidwell *et al.*, 2011), AbM members tend to distinguish between people who they might send a PCM to and those they would not. This means that PCM respects a certain code of practice, where PCM is used with people whom they know can afford to call back. This code of practice resembles the "rules of beeping" described by Donner (2008b) in the literature review.[318]

[318] In my own experience with mobile phones, while on fieldwork, I often received PCM from some AbM members with whom I was working. As a foreign researcher, AbM members who sent me these PCM perceived me as a 'rich' person, and for this reason would not spend their airtime on calling me.

Similar to the practices of use among “beepers” in Africa (Donner, 2008b), some members attempted to create systems to spend less on airtime. Yet, the examples given in the previous Chapter seem to have demanded some time and effort from both callers/senders and receivers to adapt their use of technology to create systems that worked in their context. Moreover, apart from these few examples, there was little evidence of widely used methods to save airtime for the majority of members.

7.1.4 Analysis of Sense of agency

Sense of agency represents the extent to which an individual feels capable and empowered to engage in social or political action (Watts and Guessous, 2006; Watts *et al.*, 2003). Analysis of data focused on identifying how AbM members perceived their capabilities and empowerment – as suggested in literature (Gutierrez, 1995; Watts *et al.*, 2003; Zimmerman, 1995) – to engage with AbM; and which factors influence individual motivation into leading or taking part in AbM related activities.

The first examples of sense of agency identified from the data come from members relating to the time before the creation and/or joining of AbM. According to these members, circumstances in informal settlements drove them to get involved in organisations, which they believed could result in development and provision of services to their informal settlements. Sense of agency, in this case, seem to be driven by a desire to exert influence on matters of concern to them (Gigler, 2004; Watts, unpublished).

Yet, sense of agency is not only motivated by positive influence. Anger and disillusionment can work as propellers for action (Castells, 2009; Passy and Giugni, 2001). Some members described being motivated to create or join AbM after feeling disillusioned with political parties and government officials’ unfulfilled promises.

Sense of agency can also be interpreted or acted upon in different ways. Some of AbM members felt that their “agency” can be represented by the decision to join AbM, seeking for help for their problems, such as evictions, or corruption.

As described in the previous Chapter, shared experiences within the collective have influenced sense of agency, especially through individual solidarity, responsibility, and self-confidence.

Solidarity and the creation of bonds can inspire people to put their body on the front line (McAdam, 1986; Polletta, 2002), inspiring a sense of agency in individuals. Some members talked about, what Polletta (2002) and Jasper (1997) described as, a sense of belonging. Sense of belonging was observed in some members' description of trust and commitment towards AbM and its members.

The development of trust and social bonds was strongly based on an individual engagement with AbM. This becomes clear when comparing individuals' views about community life before and after AbM. Similar to the description given in the contextual background Chapter, informal settlements in which AbM has branches, are heterogeneous places. Before AbM, members did not experience a life in a community, and had little or no social links with residents of the same informal settlement.

Yet, through engaging with AbM, and learning about one another, some members were able to develop solidarity that, as suggested in the literature (Summers-Effler, 2002), might build a sense of community.

Some members have described the development of solidarity, which was associated with a sense of gratitude towards AbM and the support they received. Solidarity, as a source of emotional energy, might reinforce a sense of responsibility (Walker, 2009). For some members, solidarity was expressed through feelings of commitment and responsibility towards other members, neighbours, and the community.

Similar to dynamics that have been described in other movements (McAdam, 1986; Polletta, 2002), solidarity to some members meant taking personal risks, believing in the struggle and the need to work as a collective against injustices.

Sense of responsibility, as well as solidarity and social bonds, enabled the emergence of political voice among some members. These factors have the potential to inspire people to take risks (McAdam, 1986; Polletta, 2002) and develop a political voice.

Yet, responsibility and commitment comes at a cost. Generally, "participation in social movements depends on personal availability, that is, the amount of time at one's disposal to be devoted to collective action" (Passy and Giugni, 2001, p.126). As described by many examples in the previous Chapter, for some AbM members, responsibility and commitment brought participation costs and financial burden to their already constrained resources.

A sense of agency is not only motivated by positive stimuli (Castells, 2009; Jasper and Poulsen, 1995; McAdam and Paulsen, 1993; Passy and Giugni, 2001). Some members, for instance, demonstrate having a high sense of agency, motivated by the expectation and dependency of other members on them.

The expectations of, and dependency on, some AbM members resemble the patronage relations in informal settlements (Carter and May, 1999; Francis, 2002; Kessel and Oomen, 1997).[319] However, similar to Pithouse (2008), I have not detected any evidence of members of AbM's imposing patronage based relationships within AbM's structure. And yet, attitudes and expectations of many AbM members and residents of informal settlements seem to mirror attitudes based on patronage relationships. This attitude of expectation skews relationships, and has a negative effect on the sense of agency of some members. As a result, it seems to have also had a negative impact in the development of political voice.

This resemblance to patronage relations can be observed in some members' and shack dwellers' expectations that leaders have to assist them, even if that means at the expense of leaders personal financial resources.

[319] See Chapter 4, section 4.1.1.

Similarly to what was described by Chiumbu (2012), regarding community members reaching out to community leaders for help and assistance, some AbM members felt obliged to use their personal airtime to aid members and residents. Yet, while mobile phones have enabled communication (Brinkman *et al.*, 2009; Chiumbu, 2012), they have also created an added, and major, financial burden for these leaders.

Like patronage relationships (Auyero, 2000; de Wit and Berner, 2009; Robins *et al.*, 2008), these demands seem to be based on the assumption that these members (or leaders as they are seen) have resources. The problem is particularly acute to members with leadership positions in AbM, suggesting that a high position in the organisation implies to many members that an individual is 'affluent'.

Even members with leadership positions demonstrate dependency towards other members. This might be linked to what the literature refers to as a lack of time to devote to engaging in activities (Diani, 2003; Passy and Giugni, 2001), and resources such as funds, social networks and energy to engage (McAdam, 1986; Mitlin and Bebbington, 2006). Yet, all of these leaders shared almost the same amount of (limited) time and resources.

Other reasons behind some leaders inaction or dependency might be explained by what the literature described as "individual perceptions are strong predictors of engagement" in social movements (Passy and Giugni, 2001, p.125). As suggested in the literature this, in the case of AbM, means that these leaders did not perceive that they were able to perform actions or be as effective as the other leaders. Thus, possibly limiting their sense of agency.

Lastly, the issue of free riding cannot be dismissed. As experienced by many social movements (Bennett and Segerberg, 2012; Castells, 2009; Hale *et al.*, 1999), some individuals believe that it is more cost-efficient not to contribute and benefit from others efforts.

7.1.5 Analysis of Reflection

As explained in the literature review (see Chapter 2): reflection can be described in different stages, although it is not understood as a linear process, but a continuous iterative process, affecting, and being affected by, action (Freire, 1970, 1983, 1985a).

More specifically, reflection contributes to the process of developing political voice. It is more than simply "turning back" on experiences; reflection is an "assessment" of experiences – a critical reflection (Mezirow, 1998, p.185). Critical reflection is deeply rooted in experience (Taylor, 2008) and developed through collective processes (Carr, 2003; Castells, 2009; Freire, 1970, 1983, 1985b, 1992; Shor and Freire, 1987).[320]

A key step toward critical reflection (Mezirow, 1998), is to reflect on the source of marginalisation – described by Freire (1979) as becoming aware of a culture of silence.[321] To reflect on the cultural of silence, or powerlessness (Carr, 2003), means to recognise and understand the historical-cultural configuration in which relationships of dependency are formed (Freire, 1970).

In Chapter 6, section 6.5.1, there are a number of examples of some members reflecting the source of marginalisation and questioning the culture of silence. These include criticism on government policies, poverty, political parties and other cultural aspects such as gender, education and religion.

Gender inequality has been a common issue among South African informal settlements (Beall, 2005a; Thomas, 2002).[322] For AbM members, recognizing these inequalities and empowering women within AbM, represented an important step towards the equality of women within informal settlements and society.

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[320] See Chapter 2, section 2.5.5 for further discussion on reflection, critical reflection and reflective dialogue.

[321] See literature review Chapter, section 2.5.1.

[322] See Chapter 4, section 4.1.1.

Some members' analysis of the impact on religious teaching on shack dwellers resemble the "belief in a just world".[323] Yet, some members' critical reflection on the impact of religion, dependency, and collective low self-esteem might have influenced AbM's approach to faith and activism. AbM's approach to faith and religion focus on motivation, and not marginalisation.[324]

Only a few members seem to have critically reflected on religion. However, perspective on the motivational aspects of religious practice, that these members bring to AbM, has benefitted many other members. Talking about God, prayer, and songs of worship, together with the use of many traditional and (adapted) old anti-apartheid songs, has had a positive impact on individual members. It has reinforced AbM's structure by, as suggested in the empowerment and social movements' literature. This contributes to euphoric moods and a sense of belonging to a group (Jasper, 1997; Polletta, 2002).

Another factor identified in the previous Chapter as influencing and being influenced by reflection is self-confidence. Self-confidence is cited in the literature as critical to an individual's ability to critique the source of marginalisation and enabling them to act and to speak up (Freire, 1985a; Lucio-Villegas, 2009; Slater and Tacchi, 2004; Tacchi and Kiran, 2008).

For some AbM members, self-confidence has been influenced by the collective processes which include the development of skills, autonomy and collaboration with members and external supporters. Self-confidence was described by some members as a key aspect to their courage to stand up against corruption, government officials and the police.

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[323] Belief in a just world is related to an oppressive state in which individuals believe that they get what they deserve (*e.g.* justify their situation by attributing it to natural causes) (Hafer and Bègue, 2005; Prilleltensky and Gonick, 1996; Watts *et al.*, 1999). For a discussion of this see Chapter 2, section 2.5.1.

[324] For an instructive account see Jacob Bryant, to whom Abahlali's "members don't only speak of their movement's mission as divinely appointed and an outgrowth of God's concern for the poor, but they also point to God as a source of hope against setback and motivation towards further struggle" (2007, p.81)

Lastly, a common factor identified throughout the analysis of AbM members' reflection, is the role of the reflective dialogue. Looking at collective processes in which individuals are able to develop critical reflection provides important clues about the process of developing a political voice. Rarieya (2005) calls these "fora" of sharing and reflecting together as "reflective dialogue".

Reflective dialogue has played and important role within AbM, and mainly happens through face-to-face interactions. Through opportunities of face-to-face interaction, such as meetings, camps, and events, some AbM members were able to be influenced by the collective process to reflect, and influence others.

However, not all members have demonstrated the same level of engagement in reflective dialogue. Many members often appear to stay as mere listeners. For these members, lack of engagement in reflective dialogue, as suggested in the literature (Taylor, 2008), might have undermined the experience required to develop critical reflection.

Critical reflection can work as engine of meaningful action (Castells, 2009), and lack of critical reflection might potentially diminish the engagement in action. As it is was described in the previous Chapter (section 6.6.1), the lack of engagement with reflective dialogue described above, appears to be connected to the limited engagement and expression of political voice of some AbM members.

Finally, data collected indicates that for the vast majority of AbM members, reflective dialogue almost never happens through ICT-mediated channels. As described in this Chapter, only a few members – who were using their mobile phones for AbM related activities; and the ones using the internet to communicate (including information and coordination) with external supporters – have benefited from an ICTs mediated reflective dialogue. This finding suggests that means of communication that are not available to all members, or those which members feel unable to use, might have prevented engagement in reflective dialogue. This begs the question if some members using these ICTs have benefited more than others.

Reflecting on ICTs

Both internet and mobile phone have influenced AbM members' reflection, in different ways.

For members who were able to learn about and use the internet, besides the skills and capabilities developed, being seen using the computer has raised their status as leaders among shack dwellers. This aspect might have also created an initial feeling of increased self-steam and self-confidence among members using computers, while raising their profile within the organisation.

The few members who were able to continue to use computers and the internet, realized their own capabilities and the potential of the internet in supporting their work. This represents an appropriation of a technology which had no role in their lives before AbM. This meant that they were able to engage in meaningful use of the internet which had a potential influence in the development and expression of political voice.

Finding relevant online content (digital resources), and being able to speak English (Gigler, 2004; Pieterse, 2009; Warschauer, 2008) were factors contributing to the meaningful use of the internet of these members. For instance, members who have been networking through the internet were influenced by the exchange of information and access to communication links with a wide range of people (*e.g.* lawyers, academics, policy makers, journalists, social movements). Beyond information, these members were able to engage in a reflective dialogue with AbM supporters and members of other social movements in South Africa and abroad.[325] The development of social resources (Warschauer, 2008), has indeed contributed to the critical reflection of some members.

[325] Some AbM members were able to participate in Skype in discussions and conference panels organised by, for instance, social movements and NGOs in the US and UK.

Moreover, exposure to digital resources as well as experiences acquired through social resources (Warschauer, 2008) has made them, as described in the literature, more knowledgeable about public affairs (Norris, 2001).

Yet, for members who were not able to practise the skills learned in the computer course, an unexpected feeling emerged. These members experienced frustration after realising that despite their capacity to learn how to use this technology, their were not able to keep practicing and soon had forgotten how to use it. This brings to light how sustained access to technology is an important step for the development of members' use of technology.

Some members who have never touched a computer developed a desire to learn and engage with computers and internet as a result of their role within AbM, and reflecting on other members use and the importance of this tool for the development of the organisation. For these members the AbM website – in particular – had an important role in inciting curiosity and desire to use it.

Despite AbM's website being updated by one supporter and focused on external collaborations, which could be described as being an artefact of an elite-mediated democracy (Pickard, 2008)[326] , it has provoked a positive and trusting feeling among AbM shack dwellers. It is unclear from the data, if members who were not able to access the website, had this view based on trust; or because they lack the confidence to challenge a process which they are unfamiliar with.

Generally, members' perception of 'global awareness' and exposure of their struggle has helped to raise self-esteem and created a stronger attachment to AbM.

For members who do not use or have access to AbM's website, knowledge of the website and the effects of exposing information about their "struggle" there, has inspired feelings of self-confidence and of being looked over. These feelings have, in

[326] See literature review, Chapter 2, section 2.4.1.

turn, had a positive influence on these individuals' development of political voices. Members who have been accessing the website, and using the internet, have also had their self-confidence raised. Moreover, they have benefit from these experiences; support and exchanges to further developed their political voices (see further analysis in section 7.1.6).

Mobile phones have also instilled different kinds of reflection among members on its potential use for political voice. For all members, before joining AbM, mobile phones were mainly used for communicating with family and friends – what the literature refers to as the intimate sphere (Ling and Campbell, 2008; Miller, 2006; Sey, 2011). After joining AbM, the majority of these members kept mobile phone airtime usage dedicated to the intimate sphere. However, these members saw in mobile phones the opportunity to stay in touch with each other in times of crises – asking for support or intervention on their behalf. For these members, reaching support through mobiles has given them a feeling of being protected and empowered.

Some members, through engagement with AbM started to reflect and realize the potential of this technology for AbM activities as well as their individual lives. The demand for use, as well as prioritisation of airtime funds for AbM related activities shows how these individuals' reflection shaped practice and use of this technology.[327]

Mobile phones support the activities of social movements and grassroots organisations (Arsenault, 2006; Chiumbu, 2012; Obadare, 2006). This has also been found to be the case for AbM. However, this was not an immediate effect. Mobile phone use for AbM related activities emerged as a result of members' realization of the phones potential in supporting their work within AbM. As suggested in the literature (Arsenault, 2006; Obadare, 2006; Rheingold, 2002, 2008), some members realized the potential of mobile phones for mobilization, strengthening networks, and speedy communication. Some members used mobile phones to reach supporters, developing what some

[327] This is described in section 6.2.1.4, of the previous Chapter.

authors describe as the "creation of social capital" (Chiumbu, 2012), or social resources (Warschauer, 2008).

But these members have also struggled with limited funds to find ways to communicate and assist other members. These members' sense of responsibility created a constant demand on their personal mobile phones, which echoed the social pressure and the "bread winning" status identified in the literature review (Donner, 2008b; Horst and Miller, 2006; Molony, 2008; Sey, 2006).[328]

Moreover, this reflection often reinforced that mobile phones should not substitute face-to-face communication. Resembling Suárez's (2006) observations of Spanish protestors, these AbM members were concerned that mobile phone communication can be exclusionary by not providing spaces for deliberative discussion.

7.1.6 Action: expressing political voice

An important aspect identified in the previous Chapter, is the separation the individual and AbM's political voice. As described previously, despite individual members having benefited from AbM's voice, AbM's voice does not always reflect an aggregation of individual members' voices. Likewise, there were some clear differences how individual members felt able to express their political voice.

Face-to-face interactions were the most common channel for the expression of members' political voice. As described in the previous Chapter, collective processes were fundamental to the development and expression of members' political voices. It is also through face-to-face interactions that much of AbM's voice was built.

However, many members described feeling empowered by AbM's collective processes and actions, some did not demonstrate having developed capabilities and self-determination (Gamson, 1991; Tropp and Brown, 2004), as other members in the

[328] A member described that: "This phone, now, I sleep and wake up with the phone, I go to the toilet with the phone, I bath with this phone. It's like, it cannot be out of my sight" (AbM member 1, 2010).

organisation did. Examples of the difference between members were evident in the understanding of the decision-making process and the ability to express their voices independently. Some members have also, as suggested previously, failed to: engage in reflective dialogue opportunities, express views, and concerns leading to expressions of AbM's voice.

An obvious but important point is that limited engagement of members means that their individual voice does not contribute to the organisational voice. Silent or not spoken disagreement becomes tacit agreement. For this reason, even if they disagree with a decision, their individual political voices are not represented as part of AbM's organisational voice. More outspoken and engaged members have their individual voices represented in the decision making and discussions taking place within AbM. At the same time, while being outspoken and more engaged these members have, even if unintended, dominated or exerted greater control over AbM's organisational voice and structure.

However, outspoken members are not solely responsible for the lack of political voice of other members. As described in the previous Chapter (section 6.4.3), dependence and expectations of some members on other members suggests a replication of patronage relations (Auyero, 2000; Robins *et al.*, 2008), which are characteristic of many South African informal settlements (Botes and van Rensburg, 2000; de Wit and Berner, 2009; Huchzermeyer, 2004). Although data collected does not lend itself to make this link, anecdotally the examples described above suggest that the dynamics akin to those of patronage relationships are found in AbM. These patronage relationships inhibit engagement of members in AbM activities, and affect the development of their political voice.

Outspoken members have often been responsible to leading many AbM related activities. As a result, they developed self-confidence and acquired important experiences in leading other members. Similar to the literature (Fung and Wright, 2001; Gaventa and Cornwall, 2008; Naidoo, 2001), these members have learned that,

for AbM to be democratic, members should represent themselves in the decision-making process.

These members have also demonstrated a more engaged in reflective dialogue, while instigating critical reflection towards the source of oppression, and the debate among members.

Self-confidence contributed to individuals' voice (Lucio-Villegas, 2009; Slater and Tacchi, 2004), and this is particularly evident among outspoken members.

Similar to what was observed in other movements, for many of these members, expressed their political voice by taking action in the form of challenging or defying institutions (Slater and Tacchi, 2004; Sonn and Fisher, 2005.).

Polletta (2002) found that people who engage in social movements develop skills in negotiating agendas and to engage with political authorities. AbM members are no different in this respect. Collaborations with external supporters have enhanced self-confidence, and the development of skills and capabilities on how to deal with government officials.

Moreover, AbM members have learned how to put pressure on unresponsive government departments, by threatening with marches and protests, where they felt that they are owed a response or explanation. Willems (2010) noted that other South African social movements use political songs and slogans and the toyi-toyi dance in protests and marches. Likewise AbM has used creative ways to speak out during marches and protests.

Marches and protests were important to express members' collective grievances, and to motivate other members to the "struggle". This kind of event worked as an opportunity to get people together, where members could see "the state of the movement" and gauge people's mood.

Yet, for the few members who were responsible for the organisation of marches and protests, as well as dealing with the media and writing articles, the experiences have been more enriching than simply being guided by other members leadership. The role of these more engaged members in speaking on behalf of AbM exposed them to a variety of people and situations, enriching their experiences and ability to express political voice.

ICTs role for political voice

Both internet and mobile phones were key to the development and expression of some members political voices and AbM's organisational voice.

Internet use has, generally speaking, strengthened and broadened (Mercer, 2004; Norris, 2001) AbM's activities and consequently contributed to its organisational voice. As observed by Wasserman (2005) in other social movements, AbM has benefited from the use of internet tools to disseminate information to media and external supporters, nationally and internationally. Similar to other social movements (Abbott, 2001), AbM reached and mobilized "like-minded groups" through the internet and developed a network of supporters.

By means of its online presence and through the development of social resources (Warschauer, 2008), AbM gathered support and funds to assist shack dwellers (members and non-members) and publicised the crisis affecting them (*e.g.* Kennedy attacks).

Despite the internet having mainly benefited the communication between the organisation and external support and media, the majority of members who did not have access to the internet trusted the ones using the internet that their interests were represented within AbM's online voice.

However, only members with internet access were able to directly engage in what the literature calls "online political participation" (Castells *et al.*, 2006; Hermanns, 2008; Papacharissi, 2002; Selwyn, 2004). Meaningful use of the internet (Bonfadelli, 2002;

Orlikowski, 2000; Selwyn, 2004; Silverstone, 1996) for political voice, was observed only among these members.

These members access and engagement with internet allowed them to develop skills and capabilities to take advantage of the tools and features available online, and develop their and AbM's political voice online. As found elsewhere, being able to communicate and mobilize like-minded groups (Abbott, 2001; Shaw, 2013); access official documents and services (Hacker and Dijk, 2000; Hague and Loader, 1999; Norris, 2001); were also fundamental for the work of AbM members online. These members have demonstrated being more knowledgeable about public affairs (Norris, 2001) that directly affected them as shack dwellers (*e.g.* current RDP housing policy and approach to service delivery for informal settlements).

Fluency in English, once again, represented a crucial aspect for the engagement of these members with the internet. This has, contributed to the development of human and social resources (Warschauer, 2008).

The status provided by internet use has also helped some members to be respected and expected to lead within AbM. The internet, in this case, seem to have also enhanced the different of roles and expectation among members, and for this reason might have inhibited some members engagement in AbM and expression of political voice.

Mobile phones, on the other hand, had a more empowering role for the development of political voice among many more members.

Mobile phones are often characterised as tools for mobilization (Arsenault, 2006; Obadare, 2006; Wasserman, 2011) and individual political participation (Stump *et al.*, 2008; Suárez, 2006). Throughout this dissertation, a number of examples of mobile phone use for mobilization have been described and analysed.

There is no doubt that mobile phones have played an important role as a communication tool between AbM members, with external supporters and media.

Communication between AbM members and these other groups were more evident than “communication between citizens and governing institutions”, as suggested in the literature (UNDP, 2012; Wasserman, 2011).

Nevertheless, mobile phones have been used to express political voice to government officials. As the example of the “cellphone toyi-toying” showed, AbM members developed new ways to put pressure on government to respond to their demands.

Moreover, this kind of collective action mobilised through mobile phones, has inspired feelings of excitement, self-confidence, and unity among some members.

When comparing the use of mobile phones before and after joining AbM, it becomes clear that members of AbM re-purposed this technology. Some members attached new meaning to mobile phones which did not exist before as a result of engagement with AbM and new demands placed upon members. As the examples above demonstrate, some members started to engage in meaningful use of mobile phones for political voice.

Yet, as it happened in other parts of the world (Morozov, 2011; UNDP, 2012; Zuckerman, 2010), fear of being monitored by police and government seem to have hampered the use of mobile phones among some AbM members. Moreover, members have often been the targets of threats through mobile phone, which has led to a number of adaptations to the way they used their personal phones. The fear that their phones are being tracked, as literature review suggests (Cullum, 2010; UNDP, 2012), has created a lot of anxiety and has had a limiting, if not debilitating, effect on the use of mobile phones.

Despite all aspects inhibiting wide use of mobile phones within AbM, mobile phones have played an increasingly important role in organising and mobilising members. It has enabled communication, which led to specific political actions (*e.g.* marches), as well as strengthening social bonds and securing support. Although not necessarily being used for expressing political voice, is has often enabled the kind of communication which supports the process of developing a political voice.

7.2 Revisiting the research questions

The research project described here is structured along two research questions. In order to answer these questions an analytical framework was devised bringing together a wide range of literature which covered, ICTs, social movements (applied to grassroots organisations), and the development of political voice, in the context of marginalised individuals.

Now, I revisit both of the research questions and summarise the findings in the light of the literature to provide an answer for each of the research questions. This section thus brings together the findings described in Chapter 6, the analysis and discussion provided above, and the literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

How do shack dwellers develop a political voice?

The factors described in this dissertation (*i.e.* collective processes, development of trust and social bonds) have all played different roles in influencing the development of the political voice of individual shack dwellers. These factors are not independent of each other. However, there is no discernible pattern or common arrangement of the different factors. Although the development of a political voice does not depend on all factors equally, the factors should not be viewed in isolation.

Looking at how the collective level influences the individual level, and vice versa, was fundamental to identify factors influencing the development and expression of political voice. At the individual level, the literature suggests that self-confidence (Tacchi and Kiran, 2008) emerges as a key factor influencing the development of shack dwellers' political voice. Inside grassroots organisations, shack dwellers might experience feelings of increased self-confidence, encouraging them to join marches, and speak up against violations of their rights. Self-confidence is an important factor to enable collaboration with other members, and deal, as equals, with external supporters, media and government.

Relational factors such as solidarity, trust, and social bonds (Diani, 2000; Lawler and Thye, 1999; Milan, 2013; Passy and Giugni, 2001; Summers-Effler, 2002) emerged from the data as fundamental to the engagement of shack dwellers in activities that lead to an increased political voice. These relational factors have the potential to inspire individuals, for instance, to share knowledge and develop capabilities (Gamson, 1991), take risks (McAdam, 1986; Polletta, 2002), foster a sense of collective identity (Garrett, 2006).

However, relational factors can be hampered by a number of social and political circumstances. In South Africa, for instance, shack dwellers are divided along race, class, age, language, and ethnicity (Morris and Hindson, 1992). Social and political divisions have led to disputes, dissent, and violence among shack dwellers (Bremner, 1994; Crankshaw, 1996; Smit, 2006). As the case study showed, grassroots organisations can be undermined by suspicion and dissent among shack dwellers as well as towards external supporters. Moreover, shack dwellers are commonly enmeshed in well-established patronage relations (Carter and May, 1999; Francis, 2002; Kessel and Oomen, 1997). These patronage relationships reinforce existing social and economic inequalities and created further tension among shack dwellers.

Despite that, data suggests that mistrust among shack dwellers and mistrust towards external supporters, as well as patronage relations, can be overcome inside a grassroots organisation. In a grassroots organisation shack dwellers are able to participate in collective processes, are impacted by events, and experience feelings that can lead to solidarity, trust, and social bonds. Collective processes include sharing of experiences, information, and support, which positively affect self-confidence. By engaging in collective processes, shack dwellers can strengthen their individual political voices.

Some collective processes have a positive influence on individual and relational factors (such as the ones described above), and have thus the potential to create incentives for developing and expressing an individual political voice. For instance, collective self-organisation, that is the ability of individuals to arrange their own affairs without

outside intervention (Alinsky, 1946; Gaventa and Cornwall, 2008; Phillips, 2003), emerges from data as an important factor in realising their own capacities. Through self-organisation shack dwellers can develop solidarity, social bonds, trust, become commitment to activities, feel responsible for other shack dwellers, lead, and develop self-confidence.

My interview data and participant observation suggests that face-to-face interaction was key to the engagement of shack dwellers in collective processes. Through face-to-face interaction, such as meetings, many shack dwellers were able to learn from, and about, one another and establish trusted relationships. AbM members, for instance, described that through frequent face-to-face interaction they learned that they all shared the same challenges, and that they could not expect authorities to provide for them (see section 6.2.1.2). It was also through frequent face-to-face meetings, and support received, that shack dwellers started to develop trusted relationships with external supporters (*e.g.* academics, journalists and NGO members). My findings confirm what the literature describes for grassroots movements: that sharing grievances and views, and developing social bonds and solidarity, turns the collective into a source of emotional strength, potentially empowering individuals (Garrett, 2006; Lawler and Thye, 1999; Lucio-Villegas, 2009; Summers-Effler, 2002).

Descriptions in interviews of mutual learning and the emotional support gained from face-to-face collective processes increased social bonding, and a sense of ownership of the "struggle" against adversity. Celebratory or mourning events, as well as singing and praying together, can create emotional ties between members of a grassroots organisation. Praying and singing might raise self-confidence, sharing, and commitment to an organisation. Most importantly, singing and praying can have a therapeutic and inspirational effect on traumatized marginalised members.

Reflective dialogue (Rarieya, 2005) is another collective process that thrives through face-to-face channels. In reflective dialogue shack dwellers are able to articulate and externalize frustration and to instigate discussions. Through engaging in reflective dialogue with external supporters, shack dwellers can engage in discussions about, for

instance, government policies, politics, and oppression.[329] My analysis suggests that these exchanges can serve an important function in the formation of the political voice of a grassroots organisation, and the political voices of its members.

Political voice may be formed, and expressed (*e.g.* expressing views within discussions, voting, joining task groups) through frequent opportunities to engage in reflective dialogue. As the case study suggests, through reflective dialogue, members are able to share frustrations and stories of mistrust and recognise the need for speaking out and mobilizing to effect change. Moreover, shack dwellers can devise strategies to coordinate action.

Examples of these coordinated actions (described in section 6.6) demonstrate how shack dwellers have felt self-confident and empowered to engage in such kinds of expression of political voice. This included, actions that challenge and defy government institutions (Slater and Tacchi, 2004; Sonn and Fisher, 2005) such as illegal electricity connections, and demanding respect when dealing with condescending government officials.

Each factor analysed in this case study – social context, resources, sense of agency, reflection and action – interact with one another, and have a influence on the development of shack dwellers political voice. Although these factors cannot be seen as a linear pathway to describe the process of developing a political voice, they cannot be studied in isolation.

What is the role of ICTs in the process of shack dwellers developing a political voice?

ICTs play a role in the development of political voice in numerous complex and dynamic ways. The case study suggests that an enhanced political voice might lead to meaningful use of ICTs. Moreover, meaningful use of ICTs might contribute to further

[329] See section 6.5.4.

development of a political voice.

First, the case study supports the view that technology in and of itself is not the cause of change (Castells, 2009; Margolis and Resnick, 2000; van Dijk, 2005), but contributes to change once the process of change is already taking place. In this case, 'change taking place' refers to the process of developing a political voice. Participation in grassroots organisations influences the use of ICTs by individuals. As the case study demonstrated, once shack dwellers started to further develop a political voice, some realized the potential of ICTs and started to engage in meaningful use of these technologies.[330] Data collected suggests that meaningful use of ICTs results from attaching meaning, or foreseeing the potential for change through the use of these technologies. Shack dwellers started using ICTs, not for specific features offered, but for its potential to support their work in the grassroots organisation and to express their political voice.

Most of the data presented in the case study focuses on understanding whether and how shack dwellers appropriate and/or repurpose ICTs for political voice. By looking at the factors influencing the process of developing a political voice, it was possible to gain an insight into the role of both ICTs in this process. Individual and relational factors (*e.g.* self-confidence, social bonds), for example, play a key role in influencing members' meaningful engagement with either technology. Many collective processes, such as meetings and marches, are facilitated by the use of these technologies.

Meaningful use of mobile phones for political voice is motivated by a number of factors (*e.g.* collective processes, demands, responsibilities) as well as an individual's recognition of their own capabilities. Shack dwellers re-purpose their individual use of mobile phones to support the activities of the grassroots organisation and their own political voices.

[330] This study focused on the meaningful use of mobile phones and internet for the specific purpose of expressing and supporting political voice.

Mobile phones can be used as a channel to express organisational political voice, and individual political voice. In the case of AbM this occurred through issuing press statements, speaking to journalist, communicating with government officials, and engage into actions such as “cellphone toy-toying”.[331] Mobile phones play, however, a greater role in shaping the process of developing a political voice.

Mobile phones can play a role in the process of developing a political voice by enabling the mobilization of shack dwellers members of a grassroots organisation into collective processes such as meetings, events and marches. Mobile phones can become an important channel for members to reach and offer support, in time of crises and personal struggle. Shack dwellers interviewed, for instance, described feeling empowered by knowing that through their mobile phones they could get help from the grassroots organisation, their comrades, and lawyers. Mobile phones have enabled the development of social bonds and social capital among shack dwellers and with some external supporters. As the case study showed, mobile phones raised self-confidence of some members by offering a channel through which they could articulate actions, events, marches, as well as be in contact with media and lawyers.

Computers and internet represent a bigger challenge to most shack dwellers. Besides the low rates of computer and internet access, shack dwellers are often unable to foresee any use of these technologies because of lack of understanding of their potential, and internalized feelings of inability. However, as described in the case study, some members were able to acquaint themselves with computers and internet, and start engaging in meaningful use for political voice. Being a member of a grassroots movement can have a significant impact on having easier access and developing potential meaningful use of ICTs for political voice.

The case study described several examples of how meaningful use of computers and the internet impacts the development of political voice in shack dwellers. These examples include: conducting research and find information about subjects that

[331] See section 6.5.2.

matter to them (*e.g.* informal settlements upgrading policies); and enriching face-to-face discussion with information and knowledge acquired online.

The internet has also played a less obvious and indirect role in the development of shack dwellers' political voice. The case study showed that individuals less or not familiar with the internet felt more self-confident and empowered after learning about the reach and increased visibility of their struggle.

However, ICTs may also play a negative role in the development of political voice by presenting new challenges for marginalised users. Shack dwellers are poor and have limited funds available, which creates constrains on the way and frequency of communication, and the adoption of the technology. Lack of funds for airtime and limited access to computers may present significant challenges. Moreover, as the case suggested, the organisational structure of a grassroots organisation is shaped by resource and security constraints placed on interactions and relationships.

Language skills, or lack thereof, can present another challenge for the development of a political voice in the context of ICTs. As observed in the case study, those not fluent in English, are less inclined to engage with computers and the internet. Lack of fluency in English also means that an individual is unable to find relevant content online (Gigler, 2004; Pieterse, 2009; Warschauer, 2008), exchange information, and communicate with a range of people (*e.g.* lawyers, academics, policy makers, journalists, social movements). This has, in turn, created barriers to these members' development and expression of political voice. For mobile phone use, language ability also played a role; lacking a shared language creates obvious barriers to effective engagement similar to those of online exchanges and communication.

Meaningful use of ICTs is a product of the process of developing a political voice. As an on-going process, shack dwellers who were able to engage in use of ICTs, have strengthened their individual political voice. This means that, although ICTs were not the driving force initiating the process, they played an important role in supporting the development of some shack dwellers' political voices. However, as found in the case

study, the disparity of access and usage of ICTs among members suggests that this might create new barriers for the development and expressions of political voice by some less engaged members of grassroots organisations. ICTs use might have, even unintentionally, exacerbated differences of political voices among members.

7.3 Emerging differences: a typology of political engagement

This study has identified differences in the expression of political voices of AbM members, which suggest a typology for political engagement of shack dwellers within grassroots organisations. Based on the data presented in Chapter 6, and analysis presented in this chapter, some influencing factors emerged as potential explanations of these different political voices among shack dwellers members of a grassroots organisation. For instance, individual members have different patterns of engagement, besides leadership skills, capabilities, and experiences. They also differ in the degree of autonomy, that is acting by and for themselves independent of others. All of these factors influence the development and expression of their political voice.

I have attempted to interpret these findings and make sense of them beyond the AbM case study. In order to do that I created a three tiered typology of shack dwellers, members of a grassroots organisation. The categories reflect a qualitative, rather then quantitative, distinction in the degree of political voice. More categories could have been devised as the process is relatively fluid, but a three-tiered model provides enough resolution for analysis whilst not over-complicating the findings. I have called these three types, or categories, Drivers, Active Members, and General Members.

Applied to the case study, these categories align with the individual members' elected position in AbM, but not always. The categories used build on the data presented in Chapter 6, and are not necessarily recognised by the individuals themselves. The categories are dynamic, as is the process of developing a political voice. This means that individuals can move between categories over time, for example by engaging more or attaining better leadership skills.

Drivers

Shack dwellers most engaged, who frequently lead activities and people, and who act autonomously, I have termed Drivers. Drivers have the most developed political voice within a grassroots organisation, and are the ones who also engage effectively in meaningful use of ICTs.

In the case of AbM members, Drivers tend to speak English (although not always fluently), and were politically engaged before joining or creating a grassroots organisation. Drivers can be motivated by disillusionment with political parties and government officials. As the example of AbM showed, Drivers described that they reflected (section 6.5) on the motivations and nature of the political organisations they had joined or participated in prior to AbM, and evaluated the organisations' role and effect on poor and marginalised individuals.

Drivers had a deep understanding of how certain sources of marginalisation work. They can critically question educational and community organisations, as well as the role of religion in 'taming' the poor. Moreover, Drivers attempted to bring their realizations and understandings into wider discussions inside a grassroots organisation, and motivate other members to engage with these subjects during meetings (what I refer to as opportunities to engage in reflective dialogue). Drivers are the biggest advocates of breaking the patterns of patronage relations within organisations.[332] Critical reflection and reflective dialogue (section 6.5.4) of Drivers is a fundamental part of an organisation's voice.

As suggested in the case study, Drivers are committed to AbM beyond the community level, and thus engage more on an organisational level (as discussed in sections 6.2, 6.6 and 7.1.2). This means that Drivers often lead activities and tasks at the organisational level, including liaising with external supporters, media, and government officials. Drivers have a sense of duty, a feeling of responsibility that goes

[332] Although not specifically referring to "patronage" as a concept, but to the examples which constitute patronage (*e.g.* dependency on local leadership, pushing members to speak "their minds" in meetings)

beyond their own informal settlements. Whilst speaking on the behalf of an organisation, Drivers acquired a number of experiences, skills, and increased self-confidence which further built their ability to express their individual political voices and influence an organisational political voice .[333]

However, analysis of data also suggests that the engagement, autonomy, and confidence to speak up of Drivers might have negative effects on other members. Newer members or what I refer to as General Members (see below) may be inhibited to express their political voice by outspoken Drivers.

The analysis of social context, resources, and action, presented in this chapter, also provides key information on different levels of engagement with ICTs. The active engagement in an organisation and their perceived responsibilities toward other members can force Drivers to rely on mobile phones. They are not only proficient users but also dependent on this technology to work (*e.g.* mobilization, sharing information, liaising with supporters). As the case study shows, Drivers have drastically changed the purposes for which they are using their mobile phones, dedicating the majority of their funds for airtime expenditure the organisation's activities. Drivers tend to shift a high percentage of their personal airtime from the intimate sphere to the organisation's business depending on demand (see section 6.2.1.4). This also represents one of the few opportunities to have a quantifiable approximation of commitment of Drivers to the cause they claim to feel responsible for.

Drivers have found a new purpose for mobile phones: to engage in a meaningful use of this technology for political voice. However, this repurposing can present new challenges for Drivers. Drivers' personal mobile phones can become hubs for the organisation and mobilisation of members, as well as a channel to support members (see section 6.4.3), and a contact point for media and external supporters. As a consequence, Drivers can struggle with the high costs of airtime expenditure and the overwhelming demands coming from members and other shack dwellers.

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[333] See section 6.6 in the previous Chapter.

The development of social bonds and self-confidence helps Drivers to overcome feelings of inability to use computers to access the internet. Facilitating opportunities for the engagement with computers and internet, which are context based, relaxing and encouraging, are important to Drivers development of skills. As described in the case study, this has helped Drivers to realize the potential of the internet as a tool to support AbM activities. Together, the realisation of the potential of the internet and the growth of the organisation motivated Drivers to learn about the internet and how to use it for AbM activities. Learning about access and use of internet tools to manage and update AbM's online presence was also important to emancipate Drivers from external support which was hitherto necessary to maintain the website and facilitate other online activities.

Under these circumstances, Drivers are able to develop what Warschauer (2008) describes as: digital, human and social resources, which in turn can contribute to the development of their own political voices.

Active Members

The second category is the Active Member. Active Members share a number of features with Drivers. When looking at the social context (sections 6.2 and 7.1.2) Active Members had overcome, or broken, patterns of patronage relations by becoming independent of local political parties and traditional leadership. Active Members are often seen as leaders by residents of their respective communities and they described feeling responsible toward these people. Active Members were engaged in, and committed to, the activities of a organisation, and had strong personal bonds amongst themselves and Drivers.

The background of Active Members also bears resemblance to Drivers. Based on data described in section 6.1 (PEB) some Active Members (mostly men) were politically engaged before joining AbM, mainly by being members of anti-apartheid movements or political parties. Most importantly, the majority described their disillusionment with political parties and government, prior to the creation or joining of AbM.

Engagement in activities and sense of responsibility towards residents of their respective informal settlements, has led Active Members to re-purpose their use of mobile phones. Data collected shows that Active Members started to use mobile phones, motivated by AbM's social context (*e.g.* collective processes, social bonds) and their engagement in the organisation. Active Members shift a high percentage of their monthly airtime expenditure from their personal use – intimate sphere – to the organisation related activities (see section 6.2.1.4). Active Members tend to mobilize and support their respective communities through mobile phones (*e.g.* liaising with Drivers). Mobile phones have also reinforced Active Members status as leaders in their respective communities.

However, there are some striking differences between Active Members and Drivers. While Active Members have a political voice within meetings, events, and their respective communities, their engagement is often limited to the local level. Unlike Drivers, Active Members have rarely, or never, been responsible for activities at the organisational level (*e.g.* organisation of marches; speaking with media). Active Members demonstrated dependence on Drivers, for instance, to speak on the behalf of the organisation. Active members rarely engage in communication with external groups (*e.g.* media, other social movements) and individuals (*e.g.* academics, policy makers), and consequently, do not benefit from these exchanges.

As data from the case study showed, Active Members shared a desire to learn how to use the internet, to be able to support AbM and their communities. Active Members described that through their engagement with AbM they saw how the internet supported the development of the organisation (*e.g.* giving visibility, bringing funds and supporters, exposing violence and corruption affecting them). Through engagement with AbM, Active Members realized that they could learn how to use this technology too.

However, lack of opportunities to learn and use computers and the internet can create frustrations among some Active Members. Access to technology was not relevant before they developed an interest and need to use it, but once the demand was

created access became a major problem. Moreover, Active Members have not benefitted from the use of the internet, to develop digital, human, and social resources which, as was the case for Drivers, could have contributed to the process of further developing their political voice.

General Members

General Members demonstrate a lower level of commitment and responsibility to the grassroots organisation. General Members show a degree of expectation and dependence on Active Members and Drivers. This dependence on and expectations of Drivers and Active Members limits their ability, or willingness, to self-organise. To a certain degree, General Members often appear to be mere receivers of information and expect the leadership to decide what they ought to do, or act on their behalf. General members attitude, or lack thereof, suggests a replication of patronage relationships, commonly identified among South African shack dwellers (Auyero, 2000; Robins *et al.*, 2008).

General Members do not see themselves as dependent. As seen in the case of AbM, many described having learned about their rights, and having created links with other members (see “reflection”, section 6.5). However, General Members show limited or no engagement in reflective dialogue. General Members are often just observers of reflective dialogue taking place. While General Members can demonstrate having developed reflection as a result of their engagement with a organisation, there is no critical reflection (Mezirow, 1998) unlike in Drivers and Active Members.

Participation in expressions of AbM’s organisational political voice by General Members (*e.g.* protests and marches), for instance, has had an effect on individuals. Many claimed to have been empowered by these experiences. Yet, General Members did not, or rarely, expressed their individual voices independently within or outside of the organisation.

This means that General Members do not take advantage of opportunities to learn, or acquire experience, from the process of speaking up, nor gain the benefits that some actions provide. General Members lack independence and self-confidence and are not emotionally connected to the organisation, as compared with Active Members and Drivers. Independence, self-confidence, and an emotional connection to the organisation is important to the development of an individual political voice – or lack thereof (see section 6.6).

For General Members, as for the majority of AbM members, becoming a member of a grassroots organisation does not change or restructure existing communication channels, their communication related to the organisation occurs mainly through face-to-face channels.

The limited engagement of General Members the organisation gives an indication of why they have not used ICTs for political voice. General members rarely or never use their personal mobile phones for an organisation related activities, and maintain their airtime expenditure for the intimate sphere. General Members, however, see mobile phones as a channel to reach their organisation in times of crises, and fell safer to know that they have people who they can count on.[334]

In the case of AbM General Members had no experience of using computers, yet some had positive views on internet use by other members. The case study suggests that these members believed that AbM website helped with their cause by letting "the whole world know about them", which increased the sense of pride and security. Probably because of AbM's organisational characteristics these members developed a curiosity and desire to learn how to use the internet, this curiosity and desire did not exist before their engagement with AbM.

[334] Although in most cases they would first reach the local AbM leader (mainly face-to-face), who would then contact other AbM members to seek help, if necessary.

In order to get a better idea of the typology, I have created a matrix (Table 10, below) exemplifying the dimensions used to created the three different typology of political engagement.

Table 10 Typology of differences in the expression of political voices.

	Drivers	Active Members	General Members
Previous engagement with political organisations	Have been members of other organisations, or/and engaged in Community Development Committees before joining/creating an grassroots organisation	Have been members of organisations, or engaged in Community Development Committee before joining/creating an grassroots organisation	None had been members of any organisation, or engage in any political activity.
Motivation to create/join grassroots organisation	Described becoming disillusioned with political parties and government officials	Described becoming disillusioned with political parties and government officials	Seeking help against personal problems (*e.g.* evictions, shack fires).
Awareness of Social Context	High level of self-confidence, and engagement with activities of a grassroots organisation.	Self-confident and engaged with activities of a grassroots organisation.	Self-confident based on having their backs covered. Some level of engagement with activities of a grassroots organisation (*e.g.* participating in meetings and marches)
Leadership	Leadership: organising at the local and organisational level.	Leadership: organising only at local level.	Limited level of autonomy; not organising.
Autonomy	Autonomous	A certain degree of autonomy:	Dependent on Drivers and Active

		dependent on Drivers at organisational level	Members at local and organisational level. Demonstrating mirroring patronage relations
Reflection	Engaging, leading and encouraging reflective dialogue	Engaging in reflective dialogue	Listeners, maybe inhibited to speak out
Action: political voice	Outspoken at local and organisational level	Outspoken at local level	Listeners
Mobilization skills	Liaising with external supporters, media and government (on the behalf of an organisation)	Some level of liaising with external supporters	Do not mobilize.
Use of mobiles	Re-purposing to meaningful use of mobile phones for activities related to a grassroots organisation and externally	Re-purposing for meaningful use of mobile phones for activities of a grassroots organisation.	Mobile phones use limited to the intimate sphere
Use of mobile for collective purposes	Through mobile phones became hubs of information, communication and organisation	Through mobile phones became hubs of information, communication and organisation (mainly at local level)	Mobile phones use limited to the intimate sphere
Motivation to engage with computers and internet	Majority described overcoming feeling of inability to use computers and internet	Some described overcoming feeling of inability to use computers and internet.	Dismissive of the subject (except fluent English speakers)
Access to computer and internet	Majority have access, and a	Limited or no access to	No access or use of computers and

	somewhat proficient level of use of computers and internet	computers and internet	internet

The factors described in this Chapter, including the categorisation of different types of political voices described above, allow an understanding of the process of developing a political voice in shack dwellers, and what role ICTs have in this process. Findings and contributions which emerged from this study will be further reviewed in the next Chapter.

8. Conclusions

Global trends of rapid and unplanned urbanisation see more and more people living in informal settlements which are expanding at a rapid and unabated rate. People who live in informal settlements, shack dwellers, are often marginalised or excluded from political discourse. Decisions about their livelihoods, such as slum clearances, are made without their participation in decision-making processes. However, the process by which individuals, such as shack dwellers, can develop a political voice to express their preferences, opinions, and experiences, and to participate in democratic processes, has not been adequately addressed in the literature. The growing number of people affected around the world makes the issue of political voice of shack dwellers a pertinent research topic of social and political significance.

This dissertation investigates the development of political voice in shack dwellers, and what role information and communications technologies (ICTs) have in this process of developing political voice. The role of ICTs provides an additional angle on the problem of developing a political voice, because ICTs are said to have a transformative potential on political participation of marginalised people (Donner, 2008c; Garrett, 2006; Papacharissi, 2002).

A case study was conducted to investigate the process of developing a political voice in shack dwellers and the role of ICTs in this process, in a specific context. The case study discussed in this thesis is about a grassroots organisation, founded, composed, and led by shack dwellers in South Africa. The choice of an organisation of, for, and by shack dwellers, provides an interesting case study to understand political marginalisation and how some people can overcome it.

Data, collected from semi-structured interviews, material produced by the shack dweller themselves, and participant observation over a six-month period of fieldwork, was analysed through a conceptual framework specifically devised for this study. The framework draws on a wide range of literature to enable the identification and analysis of factors influencing the process of developing a political voice. This analysis

resulted in an explanation of how some shack dwellers can develop political voice through grassroots organising and the role of ICTs in this process.

This Chapter presents overall contribution of the study, bringing together the empirical findings with the conceptual framework and discusses the findings with a view towards the literature. The last part of this Chapter discusses limitations of this study and suggests further research.

8.1 Contribution

The research presented in this dissertation has made several contributions to the understanding of the development of political voice in marginalised individuals and the role grassroots movements and ICTs play in this development.

First, it has provided an analytical framework which gives a richer understanding of the factors that influence the development of political voice in shack dwellers. For instance, self-confidence emerges as a key factor influencing the development of shack dwellers' political voice. Shack dwellers, described feelings of increased self-confidence as empowering, encouraging them to join marches, and speak up against violation of their rights. For shack dwellers, developing self-confidence enables them to overcome feelings of inability and low self-esteem. By becoming self-confident, shack dwellers felt able to collaborate in activities with other members, and feel themselves to be equal with other actors, such as external supporters, media and government.

This framework draws on different bodies of literature (*i.e.* political voice, ICTs, social movements, empowerment, participation, conscientization, and community psychology) and thus makes some contribution to a number of different bodies of literature. From the different bodies of literature the framework combines a number of concepts (*e.g.* self-organisation, critical reflection, and reflective dialogue). The concepts were used to organise the empirical data collected for this study into analytical categories. This categorisation enabled the identification of factors relevant to the process of developing a political voice. The analysis of the data has also enabled

the identification of the role of ICTs – mobile phones and the internet – in the process of developing a political voice.

The "process" of developing a political voice is an aggregation (and often overlapping) of factors. These factors interact by enabling/constraining the development of an individual's political voice – there is no evidence of a generic model or a linear pathway in which a political voice is developed. The process is, in a number of ways, much more complex than a simple progression from A to B to C. It is a dynamic and multi-faceted process in which a number of factors interact with one another, sometimes antagonistically, sometimes complementary, sometimes synergistically depending on the individual and their specific social, economic, and political circumstances. This study has focused on identifying factors related to the context of shack dwellers, and how they interact with one another. Further work could be done to develop the framework in terms of long-term changes that affect shack dwellers. For instance, analysis of the effects of the government responding to demands over time and how this affects the political voice of marginalised individuals could be further investigated.

The analytical framework created for this study is a comprehensive approach to identify and understand factors which influence the development of political voice, as well as how these factors inhibit or enhance the appropriation and repurposing of ICTs for political voice. This novel tool created here makes a contribution to the study of these phenomena. Moreover, each of the factors discussed and their interplay opens up new options to aid the process with policy interventions. In that way the framework makes a contribution to the formulation of policy focused on integrating political voices.

The literature on political voice and the use of ICTs for political voice has generally focussed on marginalised groups at an aggregate level, and left out a deeper analysis at the individual level. This study provides a detailed investigation and identification of factors influencing the development of political voice in marginalised individuals. This study also identifies how marginalised individuals make meaningful use of ICTs in a grassroots organisation to express their political voice.

Second, the research presented here provides a rich set of empirical data of an active grassroots organisation. The detailed investigation, of both individual and collective level, provided here can be used to revisit the same research setting in the future to observe changes over time, or compare the findings with other marginalised communities and grassroots movements to get a clearer understanding or the generalizability of the findings. Most importantly, this detailed investigation contributes to overcome with the knowledge gap on marginalised groups. There has been limited in-depth fieldwork done on marginalised groups in the context of political voice and ICTs. This and further studies in this area are critical to explore why certain marginalised individuals become politically engaged. The insights from this study help to understand the role of ICTs and thus helps to devise policy to integrate and foster these voices. Without this understanding of how marginalised develop political voice, policy approaches may be ineffective as they fail to engage people in the appropriate ways.

Third, the study provides a typology that differentiates three distinct types of political voice among shack dwellers. The typology of political engagement, as presented in section 7.3, brings together factors identified as influencing the process of developing a political voice, and role of ICTs, in a qualitative, rather then quantitative, distinction among shack dwellers. It allows to differentiate types of engagement of shack dwellers in grassroots organisations, as well as emerging factors to explain the different political voices. Identifying these differences emerged from this research as key to understanding the complex configuration of political voice, at the collective level, and how this has impacts individuals differently. As described earlier, an organisational political voice cannot be seen as an aggregation of voices. Individuals play different roles in the collective and the organisations voice, and for this reasons are affected – and even benefit – in different ways.

From a practical perspective, viewing all members of a grassroots organisation as equal will miss the important differences in the roles that some have, more than others, for example in organising, mobilising, and expanding an organisation. Even individuals with similar backgrounds, living in the same communities, will have different political

engagement inside the same organisation. This means, for instance, that access to technology to support political engagement will not be relevant to every member. From a policy perspective, accessing and facilitating diverse options of political engagement might be more appropriate and less demanding on some members. However, organising and providing opportunities needs to be done in a sensible and targeted manner, in order to avoid new class division within marginalised groups and grassroots organisations.

Lastly, by reflecting on the research process I realised the importance of conducting participatory research in the development of this study. When studying shack dwellers, or marginalised groups in general, it is important to try to experience their context, to be able to make sense of the reasons behind choices, dilemmas, and views of the world.

Doing participatory methods was a useful and involved approach, and one that gave me tremendous access to people and data. Specifically, the data I was able to collect – based on relationships of trust and sharing – included information that non-participatory methods probably would not be able to collect, and also set into context the data I was analysing later on.

8.2 Limitations

As suggested in the methodology Chapter (section 3.4), data collected might have suffered from selection bias. Although attempting to broaden data collection by including different informal settlements, using referrals and approaching people at meetings and events, I was still not able to reach many members who were not actively engaged in AbM (not present at meetings or events). My data largely draws on people who were actively engaged, or involved in activities in some way.

Some of the practical aspects of conducting my study were quite challenging and required some trade-offs. The language barrier might have constrained some of the data collection. The fact that I do not speak isiZulu, and required a translation for most

meetings and events, might have prevented me from getting some information, miss some nuances, or understand other social aspects relevant to this research. I have addressed my language barrier by using a translator whenever possible, and at times have used a third party to check samples of the translations. Also, I sought clarification and additional information from the translators following interviews or events when possible to ensure that nuances or particular meanings were not missed, or at least attempted to minimise losses in translation.

Moreover, the security situation around informal settlements was another challenge, where precautions had to be taken and free movement was at times restricted. A particular challenge was the effect of the Kennedy attacks (section 5.1.1 and 6.2.2), with individuals displaced, intimidated, and in hiding meant that data collection was often challenging, requiring patience and empathy in many instances. Being a white, female, academic, meant that I might have been excluded from some discussions which members did not feel I should be present. Moreover, the close links and relationships that I establish with some members, over years, and the support I have given to the organisation forced me to critically reflect on my conduct and objectivity throughout my study.

Finally, this study explores a complex social phenomenon. The phenomenon of developing a political voice was observed through a very particular case of a specific and somewhat unique organisation. This might make generalisations about the development of political voice in marginalised individuals and the role of ICTs in that process more challenging. However, despite the idiosyncratic nature of the organisation and the unique setting of the study it was possible to reflect and evaluate a number of previously reported findings on the nature and factors influencing political voice (see, for example, Chapter 6). General characteristics of the role of ICTs in this process have been previously observed in other settings (*e.g.* use for mobilisation, *etc.*). I have integrated these previous observations into my own results to frame the argument and contribute to the discourse on the development of political voice in marginalised individuals.

8.3 Directions for future research

There are a number of directions for future research that can be undertaken to develop further the argument and test the framework of this study. Since the start of this research, access to some ICTs has improved. Currently, in December 2014, some AbM members are using more recent technologies and tools, such as 'WhatsApp'[335], to stay in touch. The price of internet airtime has gone down in South Africa, and a number of members have been able to buy cheaper smartphones abroad or through foreign supporters coming to South Africa. These technologies were less common during the data collection period in 2010. Technological change, including changes in practice, and cheaper airtime/subscription charges, offers opportunities for further research, or an expansion of this research project: including, for example, on the impact of airtime cost on the use of ICTs and participation in AbM activities; or how an increase of ICT mediated communication might impact on face-to-face communication. These were identified as important factors influencing the process of developing political voice, and changes related to cost, accessibility and use of ICTs might potentially influence the process. These changes might also offer an opportunity for a longitudinal study to assess the effects of cost and technological change over time.

Language and literacy affects how marginalised individuals engage with ICTs in other parts of the world. However, more research is necessary to understand how language and literacy affects the development of political voice within grassroots organisations that use these technologies. Is the lack of literacy and fluency in a particular dominant language (*e.g.* English) a limiting factor as it was for non-native English speakers in the AbM case study? A comparative study design to look at either other multi-lingual, or single language grassroots organisations might provide insights into the role of language and literacy in the process of developing a political voice.

[335] WhatsApp is an internet based instant messaging service for smartphones, in which users can exchange: text, images, video, and audio media messages with individuals and or groups.

The impact of traditional and entrenched patronage relationships on marginalised individuals was found to be an important aspect of the social context. Data collected for this study has shown that there is evidence to suggest that these kinds of dependency based relations have a negative impact on the development and expression of political voice. Yet, further research would be required to understand how these systems affect social movements and grassroots organisations of marginalised members.

Lastly, the growing number of informal settlements in the world suggests that current policies addressing this issue are not enabling shack dwellers to achieve development and to move out of poverty. There is a pressing need to revise policies and projects aimed at shack dwellers and understand underlying mechanisms for the failure of policies. Policies and projects need to address the realities of informal settlements in order to secure the rights and needs of shack dwellers. In order to achieve that, policies and projects need to incorporate views and demands coming from shack dwellers. Further research is required focusing on new channels and opportunities – including through the use of ICTs – to incorporate the voices of shack dwellers. This is important to create opportunities to cooperate and build together proposals for shack dwellers, with shack dwellers.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Template

1st group of interviewees: AbM members

Preparing for interview:

Explain the purpose of the interview: general description of research, why the information is being collected;

Address terms of confidentiality, how the information is going to be used and handled:

Explain the terms of the "Consent Participation Form" – if using interpreter, introduce his/her (credentials) and explain her role in the interview. Explain the format of the interview, and indicate how long the interview usually takes (also stated on the form).

Point to the contact information in the form.

Explain why is it important to record the interview, and then ask for permission to video and/or audio record it; Ask if he/she wishes to remain anonymous;

Allow interviewee to clarify any doubts about the interview

Ask them to sign the form, and give a copy of the form.

Point out that a copy of the final written thesis will be available at AbM's office.

Demographics:

Name: (refer to interview number: / community:)

Sex:

Age:

Nationality:

Region:

1st language:

Religion:

Education:

Currently working? (formal or informal/self-employed):

Monthly income:

How many family members are dependent on your income?

How many people live in your household (shack)?

Do you own/rent shack:

Cellphones:

Do you own a cellphone? (if not, do you have access to a cellphone?)

When did you first acquire a cellphone? (if not recently, how many have you had, how often you upgraded and why) (all 2nd hand?)

On average, how much do you spend on cellphone use?

Is cost a problem? Would you use it more if it were more affordable?

What percentage of the total spent with cellphone – approximately - do you spend on AbM related activities? (e.g. as opposed to family, or business)

Do you spend more now than before joining AbM? Why?

Are there any other problems that stop you from using your phone as much as you could/would like to? (cellphone coverage, skill etc)

Do you think your experience is typical? Or are others in the community more/less able to benefit from using a cellphone?

Which features do you use (call, SMS) and what for?

Do you lend it to others/does anyone else use it and what for?

Does anyone else benefit from your own use of the phone, eg do you pass on messages or information or make calls for others? How?

Do you benefit from other people's use of cellphones? How?

Are there other things you would like to use the phone for, or that you plan to use a phone for in future?

How is the new Cellphone legislation affecting you (can you register your SIM card)?

Computer Mediated Communication:

Do you have access to any computer with Internet access? Explain what kind of access: where; cost (if any) to use it / barriers (distance from computer location, cost, skill etc).

How often do you use it and for which purposes do you use it (e.g. leisure, AbM issues, personal contacts/family)? Which tools/features do you use (e.g. email, skype, chat…)?

How/where did you learn how to use these tools/features?

Where you part of the AbM computer training at University of KwaZulu Natal (2007/2008)?
Could you reflect on your experience and the impact of the training in your life and for your activities inside AbM?
What do you use these features for and how useful is it?
Do you think your experience is typical? Or are others in the community more/less able to benefit from using the Internet?
Does anyone else benefit from your own use of the Internet, e.g. do you pass on or receive messages or information for others or AbM? How?
Do you benefit from other people's use of the Internet? How?
Are there other things you would like to use the Internet for, or that you plan to use the Internet for in future?

Unstructured interview:
This part of the interview will comprise of general questions, to stimulate a personal narrative. Some questions are specific, other more general in which the interviewee's answer might lead to further specific questions. Some of the information I will be looking at, from the narratives, will include aspects of individual communication within the relation and collective level. From those I will look into the existing channels of communication (face-to-face and though ICTs). Regarding the specific role of each ICTs – Internet: World Wide Web, email, chat, voice support software (e.g. skype); and/or cellphones - I will also ask, specific questions in the context of their narratives, regarding: e.g. who uses ICTs; who benefits and in what way; which activities and opportunities were/are enabled by ICTs; existing barriers for usage.

1. Background
1.1 Different groups of people: early pioneers or late migrations to the settlement. Moved from somewhere else (where?)? How long have you been living in this settlement? (If applicable: Other area – rural or urban settlement) Why did you come to this settlement?

1.2. Inside the community: Does this settlement have a community/development centre? And/or other associations or community structure? (e.g. political party, grassroots within the settlement, church). Are you (or have you ever been) a member of any of them apart from AbM? What was your main reason for joining and what did you get out of being a member?

1.3. Outside the community: Have you ever been involved in another political/social organisation outside this settlement? (e.g. unions - COSATU); student movement, social movements: environment, landless movement; anti apartheid struggle) When? For how long were you involved? Are you still involved? (If applicable: why did you leave?) Reason and benefits of membership.

2. – On AbM involvement

2.1. Where and when did you learn about AbM (e.g. through radio, family or community member)? How long have you been with AbM? Why did you join AbM? Level of personal deprivation (e.g. long hours of work; location) – general difficulties; and how does this relate or interfere with your AbM activities?

What kind of activities have you been involved in AbM? (E.g. meetings, marches, road barricades, campaigns: No land, no house, no vote)

How important do you think these activities are (do they matter)? How they benefit you and/or other people?

Were you responsible for any activity (as a leader or member)? Who did you relate with in those activities (local community members/other community members/ AbM office/ external supporters)? Did you know some/most of these people before joining the movement? Have you met them all face-to-face?

Have you used any ICT for any of those activities? (Explain what kind of use, to communicate with whom?)

Do you think that you have responsibilities within the movement? Do you think that people demand more from you, especially through your phone? (is this a source of hassle as well?)

Have you ever make or received calls/SMS of support/offering a shoulder/ congratulating?

Where you part of the cellphone toyi-toyi to the Housing department?
How did you learn about? How many calls did you do? What do you think was the impact of this action?

– PS: which language do you usually communicate with? Any language barrier?(which language do you write your SmSs)
Do you think that anything has changed regarding the use of ICTs for you since you joined AbM? (Do you use it differently?)
Do you think AbM could do its work without cell phones or the internet? Why?

2.2. AbM impact
2.2.1. Since 'you joined AbM,' and throughout your experience there, what has change in your life? And in your community? Did your relationship with community members changed?
2.2.2. When do you get in contact with other AbM members? (it's only activities related?)
2.2.3. Which skills have you learned through your involvement with AbM? Which experiences did you get as a members/'with AbM'?
2.2.4. Who do you think has the most influence in AbM? who makes decisions? do you take part in making decisions? Who doesn't? Do you think that women and youth are 'participating' (welcome to/motivated to)?
2.2.5. how important do you see your participation in AbM meetings? What effect it has on you as a member of this group?
2.2.6. I noticed a lot of prayer and singing in the meeting. What does it mean to you? What effects it has on you? What about the group?
How much do you think AbM represents the whole community? Is there a big difference between AbM members and those who don't join? Why do some people not join?

2.3. Unit/Resilience/Emotional support ("the level of self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem"

2.3.1. when did you hear about the Kennedy Rd. Attacks? How did you react? How would you evaluate AbM respond to the attacks?

2.3.2. What about case publicity: how did the attacks echo outside AbM (locally and internationally)? Do you think that external solidarity has any impact on this case?

2.3.3 Do you think that the organisations, academics or other supporters of AbM (nationally and internationally) have had any impact locally (e.g. for AbM activities), or in your life?

2.3.4. Have you – or your family or any member of the community - ever felt treatment (e.g. eviction; by landowner)? How did you react? Who did you contact and how?

2.3.5. Do you feel threatened for being a member of AbM? If you think you are under threat, how would you react? Who would you contact?

2.3.6. Do you feel empowered by being part of AbM? How?

3.0 AbM website

3.1. Do you know the AbM website?

3.2. What's the importance of AbM website for the movement? (what does it bring? Relevance/importance?)

3.4. Do the information that is available there was previously discussed with members (in meetings or other events)? Did you take part in these discussions? What do you think it should go in there?

3.5. Is the main purpose for the members or for outsiders to find out about AbM? Could the website be made more useful for members and if so how? What sort of information/communication do members need and how could the Internet/mobiles etc be used to help them obtain it?

Finishing:

Review what was discussed over the course of the interview in case anything else occurred to them.

Is there anything else you would like to add/that I haven't mentioned? Are there other questions I should be asking?

Would you like to ask me anything about my research? Is there anything I haven't explained? If there is anything you would like to ask later, just get in contact with me (details are in the top of the form).

Is there someone else who you think it would be interested in being interviewed?

Thanks and next stages.

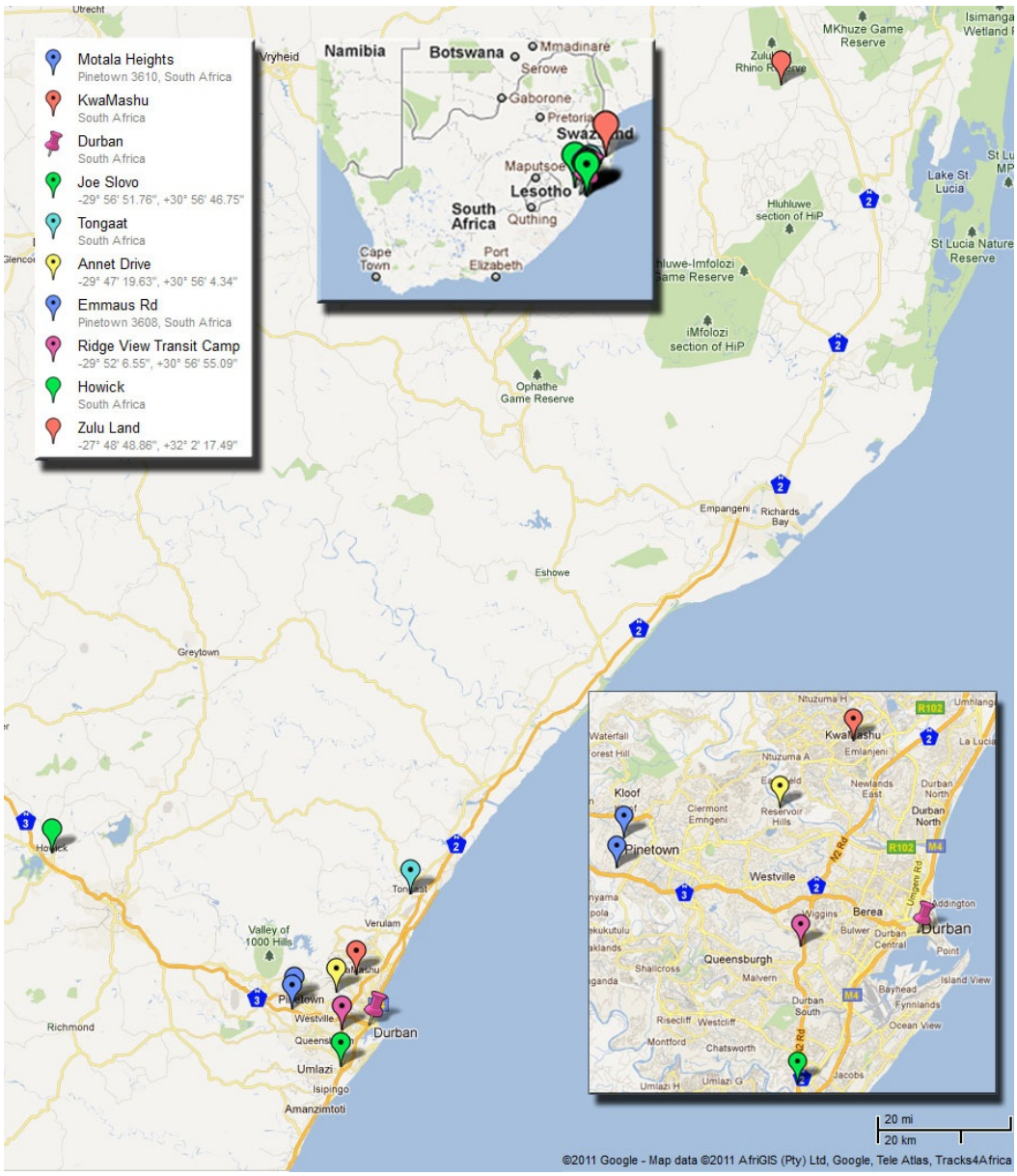
Appendix 2: Map of eThekwini municipality

source: Ethekwini Municipality. 2010. Ethekwini Municipality Map. Available: http://citymaps.durban.gov.za/website/master/viewer.htm [Accessed 04/11/2010].

Appendix 3: Map of interview locations

Source: Google Maps [Accessed 04/11/2010].

Appendix 4: Map of other locations



Source: Google Maps [Accessed 04/11/2010].

Appendix 5: Participant Consent Form – English

SPRU – SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

PARTICIPATION CONSENT FORM

"THINKING AND SPEAKING FOR OURSELVES": THE DEVELOPMENT SHACK DWELLERS' POLITICAL VOICE IN THE AGE OF ICTS

Kalinca Copello
Mobile: +27 (0) 763917538
k.copello@sussex.ac.uk

Supervisors: Dr. Justine Johnstone (j.johnstone@sussex.ac.uk), Dr. Piera Morlacchi (P.Morlacchi@sussex.ac.uk) and Prof. Nick von Tunzelmann (G.N.Von-Tunzelmann@sussex.ac.uk)

I am a PhD candidate at SPRU, University of Sussex, and I am conducting interviews for my PhD research. I am interested in learning more about the development of individual's political voice, within Abahlali baseMjondolo (AbM). Moreover, I am interested in learning more about the role of ICTs (Computer Mediated Technologies and Mobile Phones) in within this process.

During this study, you will be asked to answer some questions on your personal background, your level of participation in AbM and/or it's activities, and ICTs usage within this context. This interview was designed to be approximately one and a half hours in length. However, please feel free to expand on the topic or talk about related ideas. Also, if there are any questions you would rather not answer or that you do not feel comfortable answering, please say so and we will stop the interview or move on to the next question, whichever you prefer.

All the information will be kept confidential. I will keep the data in a secure place. Only myself and the faculty supervisors mentioned above will have access to this information. Regarding interviews made in a language, other than English, an interpreter will be used during the interview and a translator will transcribe the interview into English. Upon completion of this project, all data will be destroyed or stored in a secure location.

Participant's Agreement:
I am aware that my participation in this interview is voluntary. I understand the intent and purpose of this research. If, for any reason, at any time, I wish to stop the interview, I may do so without having to give an explanation.

The researcher has reviewed the individual and social benefits and risks of this project with me. I am aware the data will be used in a PhD research that will be publicly available at the University of Sussex Library Campus. The data gathered in this study are confidential with respect to my personal identity unless I specify otherwise.

If I have any questions about this study, I am free to contact the student researcher or the faculty supervisors. I have been offered a copy of this consent form that I may keep for my own reference. I have read the above form and, with the understanding that I can withdraw at any time and for whatever reason, I consent to participate in today's

interview.

(Please check all that apply)
[ ] I give permission for this interview to be recorded on a video and/or audio cassette.
[ ] I give permission for the following information to be included in publications resulting from this study:
[ ] my name [ ] my title [ ] direct quotes from this interview

Signature of Subject _____ Date _____

Interviewer's signature _____Date _____

Appendix 6: Participant Consent Form – isiZulu

SPRU – SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

IFOMU LEMVUME YOKUBAMBA IQHAZA

"Siyazicabangela futhi Siyazikhulumela ngokwethu": izwi lezinhlangano zentuthuko ezisemphakathini esikhathini sobuchwepheshe bezolwazi nezokuxhumana.

Kalinca Copello

Cellphone: +27 (0) 763917538

k.copello@sussex.ac.uk

Supervisors:
Dr. Justine Johnstone
(j.johnstone@sussex.ac.uk),
Dr. Piera Morlacchi
(P.Morlacchi@sussex.ac.uk
and Prof. Nick von Tunzelmann
(G.N.VonTunzelmann@sussex.ac.uk)

Ngifundela iziqu zobuDokotela eNyuvesi yase Sussex. Ngenza ucwaningo ngokubuza abantu imibuzo. Ngithanda ukufunda kabanzi ngokukhula nokuzwakaliswa kwamazwi abantu (ukuzwakalisa imibono yabo) abasemibuthweni yomphakathi. Ngithanda ukwazi ngeqhaza elibanjwa wubuchwepheshe bezolwazi nezokuxhumana (i-internet, i-email, omakhalekhukhwini, njalonjalo) ekuzwakalisweni kwamazwi abantu kulezi zinhlangano zomphakathi.

Kulolucwaningo uzocelwa ukuthi uphendule imibuzo ethize ngesimo sakho noma ngawe, iqhaza olibambayo emibuthweni yomphakathi noma ezintweni ezenziwa wumbutho, kanye nokusetshenziswa kobuchwepheshe bezolwazi kanye nezokuxhumana embuthweni womphakathi. Imibuzo yenzelwe ukuthi ithathe isikhathi esiyihora nohhafu, kepha ungakhululeka unabe noma ukhulume ngemibono ehambisana nalokhu esizokhuluma ngakho. Uma kunemibuzo ongafuni ukuyiphendula noma ongaphatheki kahle ngokuyiphendula sicela usho ukuze siyeke ukukubuza noma sidlulele emibuzweni elandelayo, kukuwe ukuthi ufuna kuphi.

Yonke imininingwane (amanothi, okuqoshiwe, nokubhaliwe) yokuphendula kwakho imibuzo izogcinwa iyimfihlo; izogcinwa kwi-webhusayithi evikelwe ngamagama ayimfihlo. Yimi nabaphathi bami kuphela abazokwazi ukufinyelela kulemininingwane nanganoma yisiphi isikhathi. Igama lakho ngeke ngiligcine lapho ngigcine khona izimpendulo zakho, kepha ngizoligcina endaweni ehlukile, nayo evikelwe ngamakhowudi kanye namagama ayimfihlo; ngaleyo ndlela akekho ozokwazi ukuhlanganisa igama lakho nezimpendulo zakho. Uma sengicwaningisisa kabanzi lonke ulwazi engiluqoqile ngizosebenzisa izinombolo, hhayi amagama abantu – ngaphandle uma unginika imvume yokusebenzisa igama lakho. Uma imibuzo ibuzwa ngolunye ulimi olungesona isingisi kuzosetshenziswa utolika ukuze atolike aphinde abhale izimpendulo zakho ngesingisi. Utolika uqeqeshelwe ukwenza lomsebenzi waphinde wasayina isivumelwano sokugcina imibuzo kanye nezimpendulo zakho kuyimfihlo

kwabanye abantu. Uma sengiqedile ngalolu cwaningo, ifayela elinamagama lizoshatshalaliswa bese kuthi izimpendulo zigcinwe esigcinenilwazi sami esivikelwe ngekhowudi yamagama ayimfihlo.

Isivumelwano Sobambe Iqhaza:
Ngiyazi ukuthi angiphoqiwe ukuthi ngibambe iqhaza. Ngiyayiqonda inhloso yalolu cwaningo. Uma ngifuna ukuyeka ukubamba iqhaza nganoma yisiphi isikhathi noma ngabe ngasiphi isizathu, ngingenza njalo ngaphandle kokuthi nginikeze incazelo.

Umcwaningi uzibhekile zonke izinto ezinhle ezingase zivele emphakathini nakimi, kanye nezingafaka engcupheni mina noma umphakathi ezihambisana nalomsebenzi. Ngiyazi ukuthi imininingwane ezotholakala izosetshenziselwa ucwaningo lweziqu zobuDokotela oluzovuleleka kunoma wubani emtatshweni wolwazi waseNyuvesi yase Sussex kanye nakwi webhusayithi yaBahlali baseMjondolo. Ngiqinisekisiwe nganeliseka ukuthi imininingwane yami izogcinwa endaweni ephephile. Ngiyaqonda ukuthi igama lami kanye neminye imininingwane engangidalula ngeke idalulwe kumuntu, ngeke ifakwe ebhukwini elizobhalwa noma emabhukwini angase abhalwe ngaphandle uma mina nginikeze imvume yalokhu esitatimendeni esingenzansi.

Uma nginemibuzo mayelana nalolu cwaningo, ngivumelekile ukuxhumana nomcwaningi ongumfundi noma abaphathi bakhe. Nginikeziwe ikhophi yalemvume yokubamba iqhaza engizoyigcina ngakimi. Ngilifundile lelifomu futhi ngiyavuma ukubamba iqhaza ekuphenduleni imibuzo engizoyibuzwa namhlanje, ngokuqonda ukuthi ngingaphuma noma yinini nanganoma yisiphi isizathu.

(Khetha ohambisana nakho)
[ ] Nginikeza imvume yokuthi lemibuzo-mpendulwano iqoshwe kwividiyo noma ekhasethini.
[ ] Nginika imvume ukuthi imininingwane elandelayo ifakwe ebhukwini elizobhalwa:
[ ] Igama lami [ ] isikhundla sami embuthweni (uma sikhona) [ ] amazwi ami acashuniwe

Isayini yobambe iqhaza _____ Usuku _____

Isayini yobuza imibuzo _____

Appendix 7: Draft of Abahlalism Manifesto

FIRST DRAFT OF A MANIFESTO FOR ABAHLALISM
THIS DRAFT HAS NOT BEEN ADOPTED BY ABM AND WILL PROBABLY CHANGE QUITE A BIT AFTER DISCUSSIONS IN ALL THE BRANCHES WHERE IT WILL BE CIRCULATED FOR FURTHER COMMENT BEFORE BEING REFERRED BACK TO THE SUB-COMMITTEE – JULY 2007

iPolitiki ePhilayo
The Abahlali baseMjondolo Manifesto for a Politics of the Poor

There are lots of documents that lay out the logic of oppression. There are some that lay out the logic of a betterThis is a term created by Ab society. But there are very few that lay out the logic of a politics of resistance. This is a pity because we have to start with our own resistance. Our own resistance is here now and it is real and it is ours. Here are the basic principles of Abahlalism as they have been worked out in many meetings during the course of our struggle:

- We are all created in the image of God therefore everyone is important. God does not want us to suffer. The forces that make us suffer are evil and must be opposed.
- The power of money over people is one source of evil in the world. The power of politics, with all its ambition, rivalry, corruption and lies, over democratic discussion is also a source of evil. The hatred and fear that some rich people feel for the poor is another source of evil. The hatred and fear that some whites and Indians feel for Africans is another source of evil. The power that some men exercise over women is another source of evil.
- Everyone who is in a settlement is from that settlement. Everyone who is poor is poor. It doesn't matter what language who speak or where you were born or where your ancestors came from. All poor people are welcomed into our movement.
- We rebel because we are oppressed. We are oppressed because we are excluded and exploited. We are excluded and exploited because the war waged on our ancestors forced them into tiny pieces of land only big enough to raise workers for the factories and the mines and the farms and kitchens. Our parents' wages were not enough to escape poverty. We came to the cities searching for a way out.
- Here in the cities we can, sometimes with a struggle, get access to the schools, hospitals, libraries, culture, cathedrals and sports fields.
- Here in the cities we live in mud and shit constantly at risk of fire and eviction.
- Here in the cities we are excluded from good land, housing, electricity, easy access to water, protective policing, refuse collection, places to trade and safe and decent work. We are also excluded from the places where thought has top down political and economic power.
- The municipalities want to force us right out of the cities. They want to dump us in rural ghettoes just like the poor were dumped in rural ghettoes in the 1950s and 1960s under apartheid. Now they are even talking about dumping us in transit camps. One Lindela is one Lindela too many.

- Our work makes the cities work but we are exploited in our work. Some of us wash or sell all day for R15. Some of us work in the factories and at the petrol stations or as cleaners. Some of stand on the side of the road all day waiting for jobs that seldom come. When the jobs come we are there and we are ready to work for little money. But as the cities get bigger and richer there is less space for us.
- We are also exploited politically. We fought for justice as much as anyone. But for the politicians, the parties and some NGOs and activists we are a ladder which they use to climb to wealth and power.
- Our exclusion and exploitation make us suffer. Our suffering justifies our rebellion.
- Our rebellion is also justified by the fact that we and our parents and our ancestors struggled for justice in this country.
- Our suffering is a hidden truth of the world. Our rebellion brings this truth out and shows things that were hidden about the true nature of the world.
- We are experts in our suffering and in the struggle that stems from our suffering. We are Professors of our suffering and our struggle.
- Our rebellion is built on three foundations: respect, courage and action. We respect everyone in the movement old and young, women and men, new members and old members. Part of respect is kindness and solidarity. But part of respect is also agreeing to stick to the truth. We face the truth, we tell the truth. We face the truth with courage, we tell the truth with courage. We act to oppose evil and we act with courage.
- Our struggle is thought in our meetings. The structure of our meetings is clearly explained in our constitution.
- We are not politicians and we do not want to be politicians because politicians rule over other people. We are not activists and we do not want to be activists because activists want to lead other people. We are ordinary poor people who have said ‘Sekwanele!’ (Enough!). We want to be ordinary people who do not suffer any more.
- Everyone whose power comes from taking the right to speak for the poor wants us to stop thinking and speaking for ourselves. Politicians, activists and NGOs all do this. They all tell us that we are ‘out of order’ when we think and speak for ourselves. We say yes, we are out of order. We say it is good to be out of order. We say this because we know that this order is built on us either being seen as the ones that suffer in silence or as the ones that threaten everyone else with short minded anger. This order is the order in which we are excluded and exploited.
- The time has come for poor people all over the world to define ourselves before someone else defines us, thinks for us, speaks for us and acts for us.
- We are poor, not stupid.
- Some people in the government and some people in left NGOs have united to lie and to call us criminals in the media for thinking and speaking for ourselves. It is clear that when the poor think and speak for ourselves we make ourselves a major threat to the order of oppression. We want to be a threat to this order. It is good to be a threat to this order. Those activists in left NGOs that don’t want the poor to speak for themselves are not serious about challenging oppression. They just want a good place for themselves on top of our struggle. They are just like the politicians in whom we no longer have faith.

- The politicians come to us at election time.
- The NGO activists come to us at their meeting times.
- We live our lives in our communities every day and night.
- We form alliances with all organisations that are prepared to talk to us and not for us, to struggle with us and not for us and to respect our democratic processes. We have strong alliances with other movements, NGOs and churches.
- We have learnt that there is a big difference between party politics and the people's politics.
- Party politics is the politics of power, rivalry, lies, corruption and ambition.
- People's politics is the politics where ordinary people can take control of their own lives.
- Everyone who enters party politics has to obey the people at the level above them.
- If you are elected to a position in people's politics you must serve the people who surround you – there is no one above you.
- In party politics you are paid a salary – you take.
- In people's politics you are not paid – you give.
- In party politics experts decide and their skills are kept for them alone.
- In people's politics the people decide and all the skills of the struggle are shared.
- In party politics only leaders can speak for the party.
- In people's politics the chance to speak for and represent the movement is shared. We do not allow NGOs or the media to individualise our movement by making one person stand for the whole movement. We insist that NGOs invite the movement to elect representatives to come to their meetings instead of inviting individuals of their choice.
- In party politics decisions about money are made in small committees.
- In people's politics all decisions about money that comes to the movement are taken in democratic meeting.
- Party politics is a dead politics. Politicians speak a language that ordinary people can't understand and turn the living experience and intelligence of ordinary people into a story that they tell about The People. This is story is their story – it has not space for our experiences and thinking. This is how we are disciplined from above.
- People's politics is a living politics. When we speak we do not use the zim zims that give the politically educated power over ordinary people. We speak to be understood. Every young man and old gogo must understand what we are saying and why. We start our discussions from the lives of the people and move from there. This is the discipline that we choose for ourselves.
- We buried our councillors. We gave them funerals. Then we marched on the mayor and then the Housing Minister and then we marched into the University of the Government (and for the rich) under the banner 'The University of Abahlali baseMjondolo'. We were burying the politicians in the government and the politicians and activists in the NGOs and the University so that we could live as human beings. Every human being matters. Every human being thinks.
- We do not vote for politicians and parties anymore. This kind of voting to send someone away so that they can rule over us gives away our power. We make ourselves strong so that who ever is the councillor or the mayor or the minister will have no choice but to speak to us. We make ourselves strong so that no one can decide for us without talking to us. We vote all the time in our committees

and our movements. The people that we elect are not elected to decide for us. They are elected to make sure that decisions are taken democratically. We can recall them at any time. Because no one is paid to be in our movement no one struggles for money in the name of the poor.

- Our demand to the people who say that they are worried about our suffering and who want to speak for us is that they must learn to speak to us and not for us. They must speak to us where we live, at the times when we are free and in our languages. If they can't speak our languages we will organise translation. Akukho ngxaki. It is best if they can live where we live for sometime before we begin the discussions.
- Our discipline that we impose on ourselves is that we only struggle with people and never for people. We stick to this no matter how desperate their circumstances.
- Our politics is a politics of the poor. This means that our politics is a homemade politics. We meet by candle light in shacks that we have built for meetings. We don't need conference centres. We make our politics where we live. Our politics is a politics that everyone can afford. We speak in the languages that the poor speak and we speak to be understood. Our politics is a politics that everyone can understand. Our politics welcomes everyone who lives in the settlements – women and men, the young and the old, people from everywhere. Our politics is a politics that everyone can be part of. We are not conference specialists. People from outside who want to develop solidarity should come to the politics of the poor, not to conferences.
- We do not accept money that is given to us to make us do or think what the people with the money want us to think and do. We do not accept money that goes to an individual rather than to the movement. These kinds of money we call breyani money. We do accept money that leaves us free to think and act for ourselves and which can be owned and used under the democratic control of the movement. But we make sure that we never organise in a way that makes us dependent on this money. If we become dependent on money then the people with money can start to control us at any time. We must always be ready to go back to organising without any money from outside.
- Our politics is also a home for the poor. We are not wanted in this society so we have to make our own home. We have to build our own shacks and to build a movement where we feel at home. Struggle is hard but because our movement is a home it keeps us together and it keeps us strong.
- In some homes women are oppressed. In our movement we make sure that women are always strong.
- The government, academics and NGOs all tell us that we are fighting for delivery. They tell us this so much that sometimes we start believing it ourselves. But we are not fighting for delivery when we demand land & housing in the city. If they spoke to us they would understand that we know that delivery means forced removal to a formal jondolo outside of the city. We are fighting for the right to define ourselves and to decide our own future. The cities were built by the poor, by migrant workers. The poor planned the land invasions that turned the cities into places for everyone. Now we want to plan the future of the cities. We don't expect to do this on our own. But we expect to be at these discussions and we expect that the needs of the worst off will be put first at these discussions.
- We have declared our own university – the University of Abahlali baseMjondolo. We have done this because every struggle needs careful thought

and we think our struggles for our selves. People who are serious about thinking about poverty and struggle should come and be part of the discussions here. Letting a few of us into NGO and academic conferences, which are conferences of the rich and the powerful, to sit quietly while people speak about us in languages and words that we don't understand is not solidarity. It just another way to make us into ladders. When we marched into the University of the Government, which is the University for the Rich, the academics who call themselves socialists called us criminals. It is clear that they will defend their right to think and speak for us by all means. Therefore they cannot liberate us. We will liberate ourselves through thinking about our own lives and experiences in our own university.

- The NGO activists tell us that we must obey them because they are struggling for socialism. Our first question is 'How can they struggle when they have no masses?' Ideas without masses will just be blown around in the wind. Our second question is 'Why is it always that we must obey someone now to be liberated later but that later never comes?'. We can't always be waiting. We have already been betrayed once. Therefore we have already liberated ourselves politically. In our movement there is already complete political equality and everyone is respected. It is true that economic liberation is harder. We do look after each other by building crèches and gardens, making sure that no one is ever left homeless after a fire. But we can't get money or do away with money within our movement. But if the poor are no longer silent, if the poor are politically freed right now, then the economy will have to change because the poor are the majority and our voices will be loud enough to force any politician to put the last first.
- God loves the poor and is with us in our struggle. We will not give up. We can't give up because if give up we will be driven out of the cities and out of hope.
- We are fighting for land and housing in the cities. We are fighting for services in the settlements while we wait for land and housing. We are fighting for our children to be able to go to good schools. We are fighting for a basic income for everybody. We are fighting to make sure that all settlements are run democratically. We are fighting for the poor and women to be strong. We are fighting to be able to define ourselves and to make our own decisions about our own future. We are fighting so that we can also be city planners. We are fighting for cities where everyone is welcome and where everyone matters. We are fighting to bring the rich down to the level of the poor so that we can discuss the future in the places and languages and at the times where the poor are strong. We are fighting to shift power from the high levels where a few rich people rule in the name of the poor majority to the low levels where the majority, the poor majority, have been waiting for too long in the mud and shit and fires. We are fighting so that life doesn't have to be a fight any more.

Appendix 8:The Mxit experience

On Mxit

Mxit is an instant messaging application, developed a South African based company, which runs on computers or on multiple mobile phones that have, at least, GPRS packet.[336] It is an extremely popular social networking tool among the youth in South Africa (Chigona, 2008; Bosch, 2008), even among marginalised youth. As I was able to observe in some informal settlements, and among children of AbM members, Mxit is a fairly easy communication tool, either free or available at a very low cost.[337]

During fieldwork, and whilst working with AbM through participant observation there was one attempt to introduce Mxit, as an alternative cheaper way to mobile phone communication. The proposed used of Mxit – which was discussed in depth with AbM members and at meetings – was proposed as an alternative to reduce costs with this technology to support AbM activities.

The Mxit introduction experience, though it has failed to concretize, revealed among AbM members, a high level of resistance and a cultural stigma in adopting a new communication tool.

Attempting to introduce Mxit

Based on concerns over airtime cost, raised during interviews and meetings, Mxit emerged as a possible alternative to mobile phone network communication. At the time, several discussions were held on the possibility to introduce Mxit to AbM. AbM

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[336] General packet radio service (GPRS), allows the access to the Internet.

[337] Although the technology seems easy to learn and has a very low cost, there are other issues associated to the general use of Mxit. For instance, staying connected to Mxit on a mobile phone, demands and high use of the phone battery. This could be a problem for users who have no or limited access to electricity. Subsequently, continuous use of mobile phones for Mxit can generally reduce the battery life and damage the keypad. For marginalised individuals who often have second-hand phones, the battery life tends to be even shorter than a newer phone. There is also the issue that an individual cannot chat with another particular individual unless they are both connected to Mxit at the same time.

member 12, who probably had the highest expenditure with his personal mobile phone bill as a consequence of role AbM, was very keen on the idea. Although he did not know how to use Mxit himself, he saw it as an opportunity to reduce costs with airtime, and maybe increase communication among the leadership. After these discussions, it was agreed to put this idea forward to other members of AbM.

The possibility of introducing Mxit to AbM was explored by asking questions about personal views, through a number of informal inquiries during meetings, and within interviews for this research. During one event, a one day-workshop organised by AbM on the 24th of April 2010, AbM member 12 and I presented the idea of using Mxit in one of the sessions of the workshop. There were over 100 AbM members present – from a number of different informal settlements – and the views presented by these members were very much in line with the informal chats and interviews I was conducting.

Apart from AbM youth, roughly under 25 years old, the majority of AbM members whom we discussed the use of Mxit had very little understanding on how the technology works, and how it could be useful for them. Although most of them acknowledge seeing the youth using it, there was an overall sense that Mxit is not relevant for AbM. In fact, even among the AbM youth, who have been using Mxit, there was a negative view on the potential use of this technology for AbM.

In some rare cases, AbM members concerns was associated to some of the problems described before – *e.g.* low battery life – however, the majority of the issues raised had little to do with the technology or its application. During the workshop, for instance, both youth and older members presented a somewhat stigmatized view towards this technology. Some of the views described during the workshop and interviews portray Mxit as a: “a technology for the youth who have time to waste”; “it is just a social networking tool for the youth”. As one member described it:

> “I have heard about Mxit, but I don’t know how to use it. I have no idea what it does. But I don’t like because people waste a lot of time on it, chatting” (AbM member 4, 2010)

Other criticism included some views associated Mxit to the possibility of having paedophiles getting in contact with the youth.[338]

The negative comments which emerged from the workshop, indicated a lot of resistance towards this technology, and surprisingly, even among the youth. AbM member 12, later reflected on this experience, expressed his surprise with the outcome of the discussion. According to him, he was expecting the "older people" to be more resistant to the introduction of Mxit; however, he did not understand the youth's attitude. He further explained:

> "Interesting the thing about Mxit use… What I discovered is that the youth, they are all using it, but when it is seen as a political instrument, something else than what they are already using for, they were not very welcoming. Even though they are already chatting with one another. At the same time, others were very disturbed by the idea. They closed the debate about it, because they though it was irrelevant to the politics and the ideas of AbM. The same stigma you were talking about" (AbM member 12).

This lack of interest – or even – refusal to adopt a new technology is briefly discussed in the literature review. Few studies suggested that often, marginalised potential users did not feel able to use, or saw a purpose to learn a new technology (Madon, 2009; Selwyn, 2004; Postma, 2001). However, the reasons behind this resistance to technology can vary immensely from group to group – or even, individual to individual.

One youth member, for instance, gave another perspective on the resistance towards Mxit. According to her, probably no one would adopt Mxit, even among the leadership. Mxit, she explained, could have worked if people already had the habit of using SMS. However, very few members use SMS, and the ones who use it – according to her – do it for very particular activities (AbM member 15, 2010).

While referring to the specific use of SMS, this member is emphasizing a very particular aspect of mobile phone use by members. With very few exceptions, the

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[338] Local media in SA has portrayed a rather negative view of Mxit, which included the potential of this system for pornography, and a couple of cases where children claimed having been contacted an alleged paedophile (Chigona, 2008).

preferred and most common use for mobile phone tools is calls, instead of sending SMSs.

AbM member 12 believes that this resistance towards Mxit was previously experienced with the Internet as well. According to him, the leadership tried to push people to do the computer training and to learn how to use emails "but people tend to avoid it, thinking there must be other way, a more traditional way". He talks about transition and that "more traditional" people seem to take longer to adapt to new technologies. Even when pushing for mobile phones, which seem to be widely spread, he described that there is the risk of excluding some people – who are either not able to afford airtime, or take advantage of all the tools available in the phone. However, he believes that this resistance could be changed:

> "It's about transition, people take time to adapt to new modes of doing things. But at the end of the day, we need communication to make the movement, specially at the collective environment, and you don't want to improve your communication, one way or the other...I think it is correct to say that it is stigma, but it may not last..." (AbM member 12, 2010).

Traditional people's view described by AbM member 12 associated with the issues raised by AbM members about Mxit – which resemble the preference for call feature instead of SMS – reinforces the oral aspect of that group.

Although it needs to be acknowledged that for isiZulu and isiXhosa native speakers, writing can become an exhausting task[339], speaking seems to be fundamental for creating bonds; increase understanding; giving immediate feedback; and increasing participation – to name a few. In effect, spoken communication – mostly face-to-face – is by far the most important mean of communication, and mobile phones call feature preference seems to represent an extension of this communication mode.

[339] This is not to say that the education level is low and people have low writing skills, but isiZulu and isiXhosa languages have very long words and sentences, which makes writing a simple SMS very difficult. This is further discussed in ChapterChapter 6, section 6.3.3.

When comparing face-to-face communication importance with Mxit, a youth member explains that people prefer to talk than actually write, because people believe in a quick response, “hearing someone’s voice”. This member gives the example of when she was using Mxit and she would get angry at something she read in the chat, but she would not be able to express her anger by writing back, or the person might not see that she is angry. She explains that when she is talking (speaking), even if her words are calm and respectful, the other person can hear and feel that she is angry. She says that these are important emotions that people like to feel (AbM member 15, 2010).